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Official Records

45th plenary meeting
Thursday, 29 November 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20)

The Acting President: The Assembly shall now continue hearing statements in explanation of vote on resolution 67/19.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank the President for the opportunity to explain our vote today. At the outset, allow me to commend the presence of President Mahmoud Abbas, who carries with him the aspirations of the people of Palestine. On this special day, we also wish to extend our hand of friendship in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We are pleased that today the Assembly has taken time to revisit its previous commitments to Palestine dating back to 1947, which gave hope for the existence of independent Arab and Jewish States. Today the Assembly has reaffirmed its previous decisions by granting Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations.

On several occasions, the Assembly has reasserted its commitment in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. We have often joined in reaffirming the vision and objective of the two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side within secure and recognized borders. We have witnessed numerous pledges of support for that cause. We have heard many voices pleading to see that struggle brought to its conclusion. The right things have been said over time. Now the right thing has been done, even if it still falls short of Palestine's full membership in this body. The promises and commitments made have to be kept.

Our vote in favour of resolution 67/19 granting non-member observer State status is an illustration of our support for the legitimate cause of the people of Palestine. The resolution presented the Assembly with yet another opportunity to recognize the independent State of Palestine, as it has recognized the State of Israel. To the United Republic of Tanzania, both States are a reality. The United Republic of Tanzania recognized Palestine as a State at its independence in 1961 and established diplomatic relations soon thereafter. We have always expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine in their quest to realize their inalienable right to self-determination. We are optimistic that the enhanced status granted today by the Assembly to the State of Palestine will provide renewed impetus to the parties to pursue vigorously all efforts to create a conducive environment for the resumption of direct and meaningful negotiations, as called for by the Secretary-

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General in his report before the Assembly today (A/67/364).

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Tanzania's undying commitment to the establishment of an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and within secure and recognized borders, with the State of Israel.

Mr. Nazario (South Sudan): In voting in favour of resolution 67/19, South Sudan supports the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine. As outlined in the resolution, the self-determination of all peoples is a right guaranteed under the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as a host of declarations and resolutions of the General Assembly. Indeed, that principle accounts for the independence of many countries represented in this global Organization.

Although an established right, self-determination is nonetheless constrained by a number of contradictory qualifications in international law, such as the affirmation of the sovereignty of the nation State and the territorial integrity of State borders. Except for the well-recognized independence from colonial domination, self-determination is always contentious.

As is well known, we in South Sudan achieved our post-colonial self-determination from the Republic of the Sudan after a struggle that lasted half a century. In the end, we achieved our self-determination as the result of a negotiated peace agreement. That is why we believe that, in the context of a conflict between two identity groups contesting the right of self-determination and the establishment of an independent State that would qualify for membership in the United Nations, the most practical and viable outcome is a negotiated agreement. Even with an agreement that results in independence, as our own case between South Sudan and the Sudan testifies, problems can also arise after the exercise of self-determination resulting in independence.

That is why we voted for the principle of self-determination for the people of Palestine, but encourage the parties to negotiate an agreement that can guarantee self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. Therefore, my country supports the continuation of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians aimed at establishing two viable States living side by side, as provided for by the 1993 Oslo Accords.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands): The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, which will be made during the debate later on.

The Netherlands strongly supports a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians on the basis of a two-State solution, based on the borders of 1967, whereby the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine will be living side by side in peace and security. Such an agreement would bring a much needed end to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and would also benefit the stability and prosperity in the region as a whole. The current status quo is untenable.

The Palestinian aspiration, as expressed in resolution 67/19, is legitimate, and the Netherlands supports the Palestinian efforts to achieve statehood. However, we would have preferred the resolution to be postponed, as its adoption at this moment could complicate efforts to resume direct negotiations between the parties. For that reason, the Netherlands decided to abstain.

The Netherlands calls for an urgent resumption of negotiations leading to an end of the conflict through a comprehensive peace agreement on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions; the Madrid principles, including land for peace; the road map; the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Netherlands stands ready to support those negotiations and will continue to support both Israel and the Palestinians bilaterally, taking into careful account the aspirations of the Palestinians for statehood and those of the Israelis for security.

We urge both sides to take the necessary steps to make progress towards a final peace agreement and to refrain from actions that might undermine the prospects for a two-State solution. In particular, we call on Israel to end all settlement activities. The Netherlands urges the international community, in particular the Quartet, to offer its full support for the achievement of a comprehensive peace agreement.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): Japan has long understood the Palestinians' aspirations to build an independent State and has supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Japan therefore endorses the two-State solution, under which Israel and a future independent Palestinian State would coexist side by side in peace and security. In the light of that, Japan

voted in favour of resolution 67/19, on the status of Palestine in the United Nations.

Japan believes that, following the adoption of that historic resolution, Palestine will assume greater responsibility as a member of the international community. We strongly urge Palestine to exert more earnest efforts towards the realization of peace in the Middle East. Japan requests both Palestine and Israel to establish relations of mutual trust and to promptly return to the negotiating table with a view to realizing the two-State solution. Japan will also continue to make an active contribution to moving the peace process forward in cooperation with the United States, the Arab countries and other partners. It is not acceptable to use the resolution just adopted to act in a way that could negatively affect or hinder direct negotiations with Israel.

Israel, for its part, should improve the environment so as to promote the resumption of peace negotiations, including by freezing settlement activities. In that regard, Japan makes the two following requests of Palestine in relation to the resolution.

First, we call on Palestine to immediately resume direct negotiations with Israel in order to move the peace process forward in a tangible way in cooperation with the international community. Secondly, we call for prudence in its conduct, such as with regard to accession to international organizations. Such actions might negatively affect the prospects for the resumption of negotiations.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sixty-five years ago today, this body adopted resolution 181 (II), which established the Plan of Partition of the territory under British mandate in Palestine. Costa Rica was one of the 33 countries that, at that time, recognized that the coexistence of two independent States was the necessary solution.

Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution 67/19, on the status of Palestine, which enables it to become a non-member observer State to the United Nations, in the belief that that step reaffirms the desire of both peoples for peace. We also believe that it helps to preserve the two-State solution, which improves the prospects for future negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Furthermore, our decision is consistent with the recognition that we granted to the State of Palestine in 2008 and with our support for its admission into UNESCO. The current leaders of the Palestinian National Authority and of Israel deserve our support. They are the legitimate alternatives to terrorism and extremism and to the many actors seeking to thwart peace.

Costa Rica underscores the fact that peace will be the result of moderate voices that accept the coexistence of two independent States, living side by side in security within internationally agreed and recognized borders. In that conviction, Costa Rica has always advocated and will advocate for the right of Israel to exist free of external threats, in particular that of terrorism. Similarly, Costa Rica is convinced of the need for the existence of an independent, sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State. It is the fervent goal of our country that the parties, working together, should resolve the differences that have so long thwarted the right of both peoples to live in peace and security.

We strongly appeal to the authorities of Israel and Palestine to return to negotiations on the core outstanding issues of the conflict in the understanding that such negotiations would be based on existing obligations and previous agreements of the parties, in accordance with international law and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala abstained in the voting on resolution 67/19, just adopted, despite the fact that we accept the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination and firmly support the establishment of an independent and sovereign State for the Palestinian people under the well-known formula of two States living side and side in peace within secure borders.

The reason for our abstention is that we are not ready to grant observer State status to an entity that we have still not recognized as a State. We remain convinced that reaching the final stage of establishing the State of Palestine should come as the outcome of direct negotiations between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. We think that that formula is the only way to ensure peace, security and stability, not only between Israel and its immediate neighbours but also in the entire Middle East.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain voted in favour of resolution 67/19, on the status of Palestine in the United Nations. Our vote demonstrates the firm and irreversible commitment of my country to a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Having said that, Spain aligns

itself with the statement to be made later today by the observer of the European Union.

If the peace process had moved forward, in line with the road map outlined in the Quartet's statement of 23 September 2011 (SG/2178), perhaps today's vote could have been avoided. Regrettably however, the peace process has remained at an impasse, and threats to the viability of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living together in peace and security, have increased.

Spain is convinced that the establishment of an independent, sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State is key to resolving the conflict and that that will positively affect the security and well-being of Israel, the normalization of regional relations and the entire international community. A just and peaceful solution can only come as the result of negotiations between the parties based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet road map and the agreements that were previously reached. The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 is another important tool for achieving a solution.

In that context, Spain calls upon the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to urgently go back to the negotiating table, without preconditions and in good faith, while rejecting any act or measure that might postpone the peace that we all yearn for.

Mr. Pintado (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Mexico voted in favour of resolution 67/19. However, we would like to explain our position on that subject.

Mexico reiterates its full and unconditional support for resolution 181 (II), in which the international community decided to establish two States, an Arab State and a Jewish State. Mexico has not strayed from that historical position. Without reservations, we declare that Israel and Palestine have the right to live as independent and democratic States that coexist in peace within safe and internationally recognized borders. We know that the adoption of the resolution today will not per se substantially change the conditions that prevail in that region.

However, we harbour the hope that the decision that we have taken will provide a vigorous impetus, in the end, to make the long-yearned for comprehensive solution to the conflict on the basis of two States a reality. That is why Mexico urgently calls for the resumption of the peace process through direct negotiations between the parties without preconditions and with a genuine desire to find a solution to all of the outstanding issues, such as the definition of the borders, the question of refugees, security arrangements and the final status of Jerusalem.

Mexico expresses its support for the leadership of the Palestinian National Authority as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and we urge it to comply with its responsibilities and not delay in resuming negotiations. Mexico condemns all acts of provocation or violence, which mainly affect the civilian population of either party. Those acts have mostly come from terrorist groups that do not recognize the right of Israel to exist and which represent an ongoing threat to stability in the region and to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Makharoblishvili (Georgia): At the outset, allow me to note that Georgia has aligned itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the observer of the European Union on the issue at hand. Nevertheless, I would like, in my national capacity, to provide a few additional points that we deem important to explain why Georgia voted in favour of resolution 67/19.

Georgia reaffirms its commitment to a two-State solution and its conviction that progress in the Middle East peace process is urgent. As a country in proximity to the Middle East and sharing its historical heritage and geographic predicaments, we are sympathetic to the aspirations of the people in the region, including those of the Palestinians for statehood and those of the Israelis for security. Both are crucial elements for achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the wider region.

Ending the conflict is of paramount importance, and that can only be achieved through a comprehensive peace agreement based on negotiations between the parties. We therefore urge the parties to resume negotiations without preconditions, and we welcome the positive signals that we have heard in recent days to that end. Our understanding is that the resolution confers on Palestine privileges and rights that are equivalent to those of non-member States and only within the General Assembly. Georgia does not consider that the decision endows Palestine with the automatic right to join international institutions and treaties as a State. It must also be considered to be without prejudice to the need for direct bilateral negotiations in accordance with existing agreements between the parties to establish

a Palestinian State living in peace and security with Israel.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): The Government of Jamaica voted in favour of resolution 67/19 on the status of Palestine in the United Nations based on a firm commitment to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Jamaica has long held the position that a solution to the situation in the Middle East can be brought about only through the peaceful negotiated settlement of a two-State solution. Jamaica has historically sought to maintain a balance on that issue, which, of course, includes Israel's right to exist within secure borders.

Jamaica fully respects and abides by the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. Our support for the resolution is therefore based on the understanding that the granting of non-member observer State status to Palestine within the United Nations is on the same basis as that given to the Holy See. For Jamaica, support for non-member observer State status within the United Nations for Palestine is not equivalent to support for automatic or immediate membership by Palestine in the United Nations. Our position on the resolution is therefore without prejudice to any future decision that the Government of Jamaica may take in relation to any application by Palestine for full membership in the United Nations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted in favour of resolution 67/19 to raise the Palestinian status in the United Nations to that of non-member observer State. That step is in keeping with the position of principle of our country. As is well known, Russia decided, in 1988, to recognize the declaration of Palestinian statehood. For some time now, there has been a working Palestinian Embassy in Moscow.

We consider the support given to today's resolution by the majority of the countries of the world serves as an important milestone in reinstating historical equality. On this day 65 years ago, a well-known resolution was adopted on the partition of the Palestinian mandate into two States (resolution 181 (II)). Half of the resolution was implemented, and now it is important that an independent and viable Palestinian State exist side by side with Israel in peace and security.

In the view of authoritative international organizations, influential regional groupings and the majority of countries of the world, the Palestinian National Authority has been able over the past few years to take great strides forward in establishing a Palestinian State by laying the necessary foundations. The primary issue hampering the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people is foreign occupation. In voting in favour of the resolution, we took into account the assurances given to us by the Palestinian Government regarding the fact that the step they have taken does not seek to target Israel, nor does it seek to isolate that country, and that there is no alternative to political negotiations to resolve the issues.

We are counting on a responsible and measured reaction from Israel and other interested parties regarding the upgrading of the status of Palestine in the United Nations. We believe that any activities aimed at taking revenge on the Palestinians for their political approach in the United Nations would constitute the collective punishment of a people as a whole and that, for us, would be categorically unacceptable. We believe it important that, as promised by the Palestinian National Authority, the upgrading of the Palestinian status in the United Nations should lead to a swift resumption of substantive negotiations between Palestine and Israel on all final status issues.

For its part, Russia, as an active member of the international community and the Quartet, will continue to do its utmost to foster, in the Quartet talks among other forums, a resumption of Palestinian-Israeli talks on the basis of accepted international law. In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the status of a Palestinian-Israeli settlement and overcome the stalemate, we have called for the convening of a ministerial meeting of the Quartet.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): I take the floor to explain Papua New Guinea's vote on resolution 67/19. Papua New Guinea recognizes both Israel and Palestine and will continue to do so. Papua New Guinea has continued to abstain in the voting on many issues that concern both Israel and Palestine. That is on the basis of the belief that, ultimately, any resolution of that long outstanding and protracted matter is for the people of both Israel and Palestine to determine. Regrettably, too many lives have been lost, and there has been untold suffering and immeasurable damage to property belonging to both parties over too many years, especially during the past few weeks. Papua New Guinea commends all the parties who were able

to secure the recent ceasefire, which is by all accounts holding up.

Papua New Guinea's own experience of a bloody internal civil conflict, which ended with a peace process, continuously serves to reminds us that the parties to a conflict must sit down and negotiate their peace in good faith, as there is no other credible process. Without that important and fundamental step, any other form of negotiations must and will fail. We therefore urge both Israel and Palestine to resume peace talks as soon as practicable and without preconditions. We continue to strongly support the two-State solution, and it remains our hope that the peoples of both Israel and Palestine will one day soon live side by side, within properly secured borders, under a durable, just and long-lasting peace.

It is from that perspective that Papua New Guinea abstained today. We respect the outcome of the General Assembly's vote, while we also remain mindful of the fact that it is the Security Council's mandate to decide on Palestine's full membership to the United Nations.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea sympathizes with the motivations behind the resolution put to the vote today (resolution 67/19), and fully understands the Palestinian people's desire for an independent State. On the other hand, the Republic of Korea is deeply concerned about the results that this resolution might bring about. Accordingly, my delegation chose to abstain. That abstention is an expression of our frustration regarding the lack of meaningful progress on the Middle East peace process. We continue to retain a sincere hope for such progress. My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the two-State solution. What is most needed now is to provide new momentum to the peace process. In that regard, it is clear that the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine can be achieved only through dialogue and negotiation.

The Republic of Korea is deeply saddened by the loss of life cause by the recent armed conflict, and welcomes the announcement of the ceasefire brought about by the efforts of the Secretary-General and other leaders of Member States. However, the current status of the ceasefire is still fragile, and there remain differences that need to be addressed through dialogue with a sense of urgency. The Republic of Korea hopes that Palestine and Israel will resume their negotiations as soon as possible to explore a permanent solution to this important issue.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania): Romania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Romania's abstention today is based on a position of principle that my country has consistently held, namely, on the need to promote dialogue and direct negotiations between the parties, within the internationally accepted settlement frameworks and existing agreements. Based on that belief, Romania does not favour unilateral initiatives, regardless of which side they come from, as they may have adverse effects on the resumption of the peace process negotiations.

Resolution 67/19, just adopted, does not facilitate the recognition of Palestine as a State or its accession to international organizations and treaties. While we recognize those goals as legitimate objectives of the Palestinian people, Romania strongly believes that the only way to fulfil the vision of a two-State solution is the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian direct negotiations. We urge the parties to engage in that process without preconditions. Romania will support any initiative that could serve that purpose. We share the position that the only viable solution is still the one promoted by the Quartet road map, which advocates for the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Portugal welcomes the adoption of resolution 67/19, which grants non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine. Portugal has long defended the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. We have done so bilaterally and most recently in discussions within the European Union, where we have from the outset defended the reasons for a positive vote on that Palestinian quest.

Portugal upholds the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders. We also firmly believe in a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution, the Quartet road map, the internationally endorsed parameters for final status issues, the agreements reached between the parties, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

True to those long-standing positions, Portugal has voted in favour of the enhancement of Palestine's status in the United Nations. We have also done so in recognition of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad and their unwavering commitment to dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the conflict and their efforts in preparing the Palestinian institutions for statehood. In our view, the rejection of violence and the choice of the diplomatic channel are fundamental tenets for achieving peace.

Portugal is hopeful that the resolution just adopted will provide much needed impetus to the peace process. A just, durable and comprehensive peace can only be reached through direct negotiations. We therefore urge the parties to resume negotiations with no further delay or preconditions. We welcome in that regard President Abbas' statement to the Assembly reiterating his commitment to the peace process (see A/67/PV.44).

The international community must now exert all efforts to ensure the swift resumption of credible negotiations with a view to a final settlement that brings about the realization of the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, while ensuring an enduring peace for all peoples in the region.

Portugal naturally aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered later on by Ambassador Mayr-Harting on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Reetoo (Mauritius): Mauritius has always supported the early realization of the Palestinians' long overdue right to self-determination and the establishment of their sovereign, independent Palestinian State, living side by side and at peace with the State of Israel, within secure borders on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. In furtherance of that policy, Mauritius has unwaveringly supported all United Nations and other initiatives aimed at an early resolution of the conflict-ridden situation in the Middle East.

Mauritius and the Palestinian National Authority maintain strong relations. On the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Mauritius reaffirms our strong solidarity with our brothers and sisters of Palestine. We hope and pray that the legitimate and long-standing aspirations for statehood and lasting peace and prosperity will materialize soon. We also reiterate that Mauritius remains fully committed to the just Palestinian cause.

Mauritius firmly believes that the question of Palestine can and must be resolved through peace and dialogue. Accordingly, we have committed our support to the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative. Mauritius also believes in a two-State solution, where the State of Israel and Palestine can live alongside each other in peace within secure borders.

It is unfortunate that there has been little headway in the peace process in the recent past. In fact, the Israeli settlement policy challenges the credibility of that process and remains one of the biggest hurdles to the resumption of peace talks. We are concerned that the continued stalemate and the hardening of the Israeli position are undermining the peace process.

In a message that the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, addressed to the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Prime Minister clearly stated that Mauritius fully endorsed the application that it boldly submitted during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. He added that Mauritius would likewise support the draft resolution relating to the enhancement of the status of Palestine.

In that spirit, Mauritius fully supports the admission of Palestine as a full United Nations Member. We applaud the statesmanship that President Mahmoud Abbas demonstrated last year when he boldly submitted the application for full United Nations membership. We salute his wisdom and courage in that regard.

On this historic day, therefore, Mauritius unconditionally endorses and supports the move for Palestine to become a non-member observer State in the General Assembly, as we did for Palestine's successful bid for membership of UNESCO. It will no doubt be a major step forward and paves the way for the ultimate fulfillment of the legitimate administration of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. At the same time, we call for the Palestinian issue to retain primacy on the international agenda until an enduring and lasting solution is reached.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

The General Assembly will now continue its debate on agenda item 37. I give the floor to those members wishing to make general statements.

Mr. Kahlil (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt congratulates the Palestinian people on their State obtaining non-member observer status in the United Nations, following the adoption of resolution 67/19. The adoption of the resolution by a majority of more than two thirds of the United Nations membership reflects the international community's recognition of Palestine's right to a Government, with all the components of a State and a territory with specific features despite the occupation and ongoing attempts of the occupying Power to annex increasingly large swathes of territory through settlement activities or other illegal actions, in complete violation of international law and the principle of the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

The granting to Palestine of observer status as non-member observer State in the United Nations is a long-awaited and historic step that will enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their fundamental inalienable rights, in particular with regard to establishing an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It provides the Palestinian people with the appropriate legal tools to respond to the crimes committed by the occupying Power with all peaceful and legal means and to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are brought to international justice.

Today, the international community has affirmed that it is capable of taking the right decision when Member States have the political will to do so. We therefore hope that, in the near future, the Security Council will assume its responsibility and take the appropriate decision to accept Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations so that it can control its own natural resources and end Israel's suppression of its people and land.

The resolution is an example of the ways in which the international community can ensure a peace process. More than 20 years after the 1991 Madrid Conference, and 30 years after the Camp David negotiations of 1979, which set out the essential elements for a two-State solution, including a Palestinian State, Israel is clearly not serious about achieving peace. The occupying Power relies on a negotiating strategy that leads nowhere. It is now creating a pretext not to relaunch negotiations by accusing the other party of violating international law and of failing to respect the previous negotiations.

Egypt therefore reaffirms the importance of returning to the negotiating table on the established basis, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We emphasize the need to put an end to the systematic settlement activities undertaken and supported by the Israeli Government. A specific timeframe for negotiations must be established that ensures a clear mechanism for future negotiations, with the provision of international guarantees to ensure that all parties fully respect all agreements. The negotiations that led to the cessation of the recent hostilities in Gaza show that it is indeed possible to achieve peace if all parties assume their responsibilities.

Finally, we call on all parties, in particular Israel, the occupying Power, and the major donor countries to refrain from unilateral measures in order to put pressure on Palestine and to prevent it from claiming its rights. Experience has shown that such measures only strengthen the resolve of the Palestinian people to uphold their legitimate rights, which are supported by the international community.

The resolution adopted today provides a historic opportunity to encourage all parties to return to the peace process in good faith and to achieve peace and security for all peoples of the region. Egypt will do its utmost to facilitate the resumption of negotiations in order to ensure that the rights and interests of all relevant parties in the region are met.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine".

Given the time constraint, I will present a condensed version of my statement on behalf of NAM. The full text of the statement is being distributed.

This important debate coincides with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is an important day not only for Palestine, but also for those of us who strongly believe in the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination and to free themselves from foreign occupation and oppression. On this day, the international community reaffirms its continued and unwavering support for and solidarity with the long-suffering people of Palestine in their national struggle to achieve the independence of their State, as well as peace and justice. NAM pays tribute to the resilience

of the Palestinian people in their pursuit of their legitimate national aspirations, which for too long they have unjustly been denied.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its grave concern regarding the critical situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israeli's prolonged military occupation and illegal policies and practices. We condemn Israel's ongoing military raids and attacks against the Palestinian civilian population, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, its settlement colonization campaign, involving, inter alia, land confiscation, the construction and expansion of settlements and outposts, the transfer of hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers, the construction of the wall, the demolition of homes and the imposition of severe restrictions on movement and hundreds of checkpoints. We condemn the detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, reprisals against the civilian population and all other measures of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. Those acts are grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

Unfortunately, today's meeting comes at a time when Israel, the occupying Power, has escalated its military campaign against the Palestinian people, in particular in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli attacks on Gaza during an eight-day period this month reportedly caused the killing of approximately 170 Palestinians, including women and children, and the wounding of about another 1,200. The situation in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is also deteriorating as a result of Israel's excessive use of force aimed at intimidating and terrorizing the Palestinian civilian population.

The Non-Aligned Movement strongly condemns the recent military campaign against the Palestinian people and underlines that, in addition to violating countless provisions of human rights law, such military aggression and collective punishment measures by Israel, the occupying Power, are tantamount to grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant United Nations resolutions. Such actions pose a serious threat to international peace and security and to regional stability.

In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement calls for accountability for the perpetration of war crimes by the occupying Power in its most recent military aggression against Gaza in order to end Israeli impunity and to realize justice for the victims.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue its illegal settlement activities, along with many other illegal policies and practices, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The situation continues to be most severe in the Jordan Valley, where thousands of Palestinians have been displaced and thousands more are at risk of displacement due to Israel's illegal colonization in and around occupied East Jerusalem. At the same time, the occupied Power continues to pursue measures aimed at the quiet transfer or depopulation of the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants and at ensuring that there is a Jewish majority in the city.

In that regard, NAM calls for a complete end to all settlement activities, demolition of homes, residency revocations, excavations, including near and around Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and the closure of Palestinian institutions in the city. We also condemn the terror, violence and provocation by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and property, including homes, agricultural lands and Muslim and Christian holy sites. We caution that such actions are fuelling religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization and that they must be brought to an immediate end by the occupied Power. NAM condemns Israel's continuing unlawful campaign of the arrest, detention and forced interrogation of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children, women and numerous elected officials, who continue to be held under harsh and inhumane conditions and to be subjected to physical and mental ill-treatment.

In that regard, the Movement condemns, inter alia, Israel's use of torture and all other forms of physical and psychological mistreatment and deprivation of Palestinian prisoners, including the denial of family visits, access to education and adequate medical care and the inhumane use of solitary confinement. As stated in the declaration on Palestinian political prisoners adopted by the sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Tehran in August, the Movement is convinced that Palestinian prisoners should be immediately released and their plight addressed by the international community, in particular the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its serious concern regarding the dangerous impasse in the Middle East peace process due to ongoing Israeli

intransigence and illegal policies. That conduct continues to undermine the resumption of credible negotiations and to obstruct the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such Israeli behaviour and its refusal to commit to the internationally endorsed parameters for the two-State solution cast a dark shadow of doubt over Israeli's professed intentions. Instead, it underscores the belief that Israel's insistence on the negotiations path is merely for the sake of managing the crisis and entrenching its illegitimate military occupation, not to actually reach any comprehensive peace settlement.

In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement Committee on Palestine has welcomed all efforts and initiatives aimed at realizing the two-State solution and justice for the Palestinian people. It stresses the importance of the Assembly's granting non-member observer State status to Palestine, and expresses the hope that this peaceful multilateral initiative, consistent with United Nations resolutions regarding the question of Palestine — including the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the international consensus on a two-State solution — will positively contribute to salvaging the prospects for peace.

In conclusion, the Movement reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, and to the immediate restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

I now wish to speak in my national capacity as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I would like to congratulate the Palestinian people and their representatives on the historic victory they achieved today in the Assembly, which truly represents the entire world. I would also like to read out a message of solidarity with the Palestinian people from Mr. Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

> "For more than 60 years, the question of Palestine has been of central concern to the free nations of the world. The cruel occupation of Palestine and displacement of its nation are considered to be not only a deprivation of the Palestinian people of their fundamental and legitimate rights, but also a violation of universal human values and a flouting of the wisdom, logic and common sense of all humanity.
>
> "The crisis in the region, which has lasted for several decades, is the unpleasant consequence of the occupation of Palestine. The expansionist, militaristic and inhumane policies of the occupying and fabricated Zionist regime have resulted in continued instability and violence in the region, the imposition of five wars on nations of the region, the killing and imprisonment of tens of thousands of people, and the displacement of millions of others. The recent aggression in Gaza was yet another clear indication of the true uncivilized nature of the Zionists and their mission.
>
> "The failure of the international community in addressing the question of Palestine is the product of the discriminatory and unilateral policies of some members of the Security Council, which have resulted in the continuation of the crisis and posed tremendous threats to international peace and security.
>
> "The great Iranian nation, while declaring its full solidarity with the suffering and oppressed people of Palestine, reiterates its continued moral support to them. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that unless heed is paid to the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people, including to exercise their right to self-determination and the elimination of all acts of aggression and occupation against them, as well as the restoration of justice and dignity to them, it will be impossible to find a just solution to the crisis.
>
> "It is obvious that the best solution to the question of Palestine would be the holding of free and fair elections with the participation of all Palestinians, including Muslims, Christians and Jews. In that regard, the international community and the United Nations in particular have a vital, effective and legitimate role to play in resolving the question of Palestine and ending the conquest. Undoubtedly, the era of Zionism and occupation is over. The future belongs to the great nation of Palestine, to other free nations and to justice, empathy and freedom."

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The present statement is based on the declaration made on behalf of the European Union earlier today by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Albania; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Today's decision of the General Assembly to accord non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine comes at a time when the latest escalation in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused the death of a large number of innocent civilians. It is a bitter reminder of the urgent necessity to move forward towards the end of the conflict. Only a political solution to the conflict can bring lasting security, peace and prosperity to Palestinians and Israelis. A comprehensive negotiated peace, which is a fundamental interest of the European Union, as well as the parties in the region, must and can be achieved on the basis of a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and a sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, both living within agreed borders and enjoying peace and security.

The European Union has repeatedly expressed its support and desire for Palestine to become a full Member of the United Nations as part of a solution to the conflict. The European Union has also consistently worked to advance the Palestinian Authority's State-building efforts under Prime Minister Fayyad. It will continue to do so.

Recalling the Berlin Declaration of March 1999, the European Union reiterates its readiness to recognize a Palestinian State when appropriate.

Looking beyond today's vote, it is important for all parties and actors involved to work towards the settlement of the conflict with renewed purpose and a sense of urgency. The European Union recalls its well known positions on intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Abbas, settlements and Israel's security. The European Union calls on all parties to pursue actions conducive to creating an environment of confidence necessary to ensure meaningful negotiations, and to refrain from actions that undermine the credibility of the process. The European Union urges both sides to seek constructive ways to overcome the current obstacles to a resumption of direct negotiations without delay or preconditions. It welcomes in that regard the positive statements previously made by President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, and urges them to maintain those commitments.

The European Union reaffirms its position that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome, together with the avoidance of unilateral measures and acts on the ground that undermine confidence and the viability of the two-State solution. The European Union reaffirms that it will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties, and recalls its position on negotiations, including the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2009 and May 2012, as well as the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union in the United Nations Security Council on 21 April 2011 (see S/PV.6520). The European Union will work actively within the Quartet and with international partners in support of efforts to bring about substantive negotiations in the coming months.

Let me also briefly refer to the statement just made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and then in his national capacity. I should just like to say that it becomes problematic when a statement on behalf of a political group is then combined with a national statement of a divisive nature.

Miss Hassan (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and to convey the message of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Ali Youssouf, as the President of the OIC.

(*spoke in English*)

We are gathered here today in the General Assembly to grant Palestine the status of non-member observer State, which is yet another affirmation of the international community's continued support to the Palestinian cause and of its solidarity with the Palestinian people. On behalf of the OIC group, I am pleased to express our gratitude to the United Nations and to all its organs for their work on that issue. In

particular, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, for their relentless efforts and initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause.

The OIC group believes that the international community has a special responsibility to help the Palestinian people realize their national rights to self-determination and sovereignty and their status as an independent State in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as to find a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees in line with resolution 194 (III) of 1948. In that regard, the international community has had a historic opportunity this afternoon, as well as the responsibility, to reaffirm its solidarity with the Palestinian people and support their just cause for independence.

The Palestinians have been intensely negotiating with Israel in good faith for the past two decades to regain their territories and their inalienable rights, and to live in peace and security. Unfortunately, none of those legitimate goals has been achieved so far, and none appears within the grasp of the Palestinians in the short term, given Israel's permanent strategy of shifting the goal posts.

It is unfortunate that on this very day of solidarity with the Palestinian people and the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State, the prospects for peace and justice in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are being challenged by the colonial and discriminatory policies and illegal practices of Israel, the occupying Power. Israel continues to build illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It is constructing an apartheid wall, restricting Palestinians' access to places of worship, encouraging escalating acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, denying the free movement of people and goods, and confiscating ever more Palestinian homes and land. Israel's violations of international law have become a daily practice, which is systematically undermining the prospects for a two-State solution.

The OIC group expresses grave concern at the situation in occupied East Jerusalem, where the Israeli settlement campaign is most intense, and calls for a complete end to all settlement activities, all excavations, including near Al-Haram Al-Sharif, all home demolitions and all residency revocations, as well as the closure of Palestinian institutions in the city. The Group condemns the terror, violence and provocation by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and property, including homes, agricultural land and Muslim and Christian holy sites, and it cautions that such actions are fuelling religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization. The occupying Power must immediately end such activities.

Moreover, Israel's escalating military aggression and the illegal blockade it imposes on the Gaza Strip are not only a collective punishment against 1.5 million Palestinians in the Strip. They also represent the continuation of a war crime against humanity, which must stop. In that vein, the OIC group once again calls on the international community, and on the Security Council in particular, to assume its responsibility to take the necessary measures for an immediate and permanent halt to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. It is past time to end the Palestinian people's suffering and to provide them with the protection and the means needed to rehabilitate and reconstruct the Gaza Strip.

Palestine's accession to full membership in UNESCO last year was a sign of international recognition of the Palestinians' rights. That achievement illustrates the concrete and positive support for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Similarly, the positive assessment by the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund with respect to the implementation of the Palestinian National Authority's 2009 plan for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State within a two-year period is yet another strong indication of Palestine's readiness for independent statehood.

In conclusion, we believe that permanent peace between Israel and Palestine is the sine qua non for both peoples to focus their energies and resources on developing their societies in peace, harmony and coexistence. The OIC Group expresses its strong solidarity with the Palestinian people and commends all Member States for their overwhelming support in favour of resolution 67/19, which enabled Palestine to become a non-member observer State. By granting Palestine improved diplomatic status — even though only a symbolic milestone in Palestinian ambitions for statehood — they have brought Israelis and Palestinians a step closer to achieving a sustainable solution on the basis of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Permanent Representative of the Sudan for his introduction, earlier today, of resolution 67/19, on Palestine's status in the United Nations, of which China was a sponsor. China also welcomes the presence of President Abbas and his important statement at today's meeting.

The resolution just adopted grants non-member observer State status to Palestine in the United Nations. That fully demonstrates the broad support of the international community for the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights. It has also furthered international recognition of the State of Palestine and is another positive step by Palestine on its road towards independent statehood, as the result of long-term efforts on the part of Palestine and other Arab countries with the support of the international community.

China warmly congratulates the people of Palestine. China has always resolutely supported the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights. Gaining independent statehood is the legitimate right of the Palestinian people and the basis and prerequisite for the realization of the two-State solution, with the two countries living peacefully side by side. China supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with full sovereignty and East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the 1967 borders.

China was one of the first countries to support the national resistance movement of Palestine and to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine. As early as 1988, China announced its recognition of the State of Palestine and established diplomatic relations with it. China supports Palestinian membership in the United Nations and other international organizations and expresses its understanding of and respect and support for the request of Palestine to become an observer State in the United Nations.

The Palestinian issue has always been at the core of the Middle East question. Only when the Palestinian issue is appropriately resolved can lasting peace and stability in the Middle East be realized. China expresses its deep concern over the protracted stalemate in the peace talks between the two parties. China hopes that all the relevant parties will resolve their disputes through political negotiations on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map for peace in the Middle East, with a view to establishing an independent State of Palestine, with Palestine and Israel living peacefully side by side.

Given the current situation, the resumption of the peace talks between Palestine and Israel is all the more important and urgent. The international community should adopt a more proactive and constructive attitude in pressing for peace talks and pushing both parties, in particular Israel as the stronger party, to adopt effective measures to remove the obstacles to the peace talks and re-establish mutual trust, so that negotiations can be resumed at an early date and substantive progress made. China will continue to play an active and constructive role in pushing for a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The action taken by the General Assembly today is indeed a birth certificate for the State of Palestine, as President Abbas said in his statement earlier today (see A/67/PV.44). The adoption by a large majority of resolution 67/19, which grants Palestine the status of non-member observer State at the United Nations, is a historic achievement and a landmark in the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve all their political rights, including the right to self-determination, and a recognition of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 1967.

The adoption of the resolution sends a clear message to the Palestinian people of the firm support of the international community for its rights. The resolution, which was adopted by the vast majority of the members of the Assembly — with 138 countries in favour — calls for the implementation of the principles of the Madrid Conference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map called for by the Quartet, in order to reach a final solution to the crisis in the Middle East and address the six main points, which are: the return of the refugees, Jerusalem, the settlements, the borders, security and water.

The State of Kuwait congratulates the brotherly Palestinian people on the support of the General Assembly, which coincides with our celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We affirm our solidarity with and full support for the lawful aspirations and ambitions of the Palestinian people. We also reaffirm the strong commitment of the leadership, Government and people of Kuwait to continue their moral, political and material support until the Israeli occupation of the occupied territories

ends and the State of Palestine is established, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In that context, we reiterate our support for the resolution of the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 12 November, which urges States that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so in order to consolidate the international consensus in favour of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. We reiterate the call of the international community to the Security Council to respond to the Palestinian request to be granted full membership.

The military aggression by Israel against Gaza that began on 14 November and continued for eight consecutive days resulted in a huge loss of life and property: 168 people were killed and more than 1,200 suffered injuries, including women, children and elderly people. That constitutes clear evidence of the brutality of Israel in its aggression and its lack of good faith in peaceful negotiations.

The inability of the United Nations to oblige Israel to fulfil its international obligations and the lack of a sincere international will to confront the occupying Israeli authorities have encouraged Israel to persist in its intransigence, ignore international legitimacy and further pursue hostile expansionist policies. There is no better proof of that than the creation of 1,200 new illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the establishment of a military camp in the Mount of Olives area. That policy flouts international norms and laws, in complete disregard for the basic tenets of international law, in particular the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention.

Those practices and other violations, such as the continued blockade of the Gaza Strip, the confiscation of land, the demolition of homes, the continued arrests of the Palestinian people — arrests that do not differentiate between child, young man or woman — and the restrictions on the movement of goods and persons, are the main reasons for the continued tension and instability in the region and undermine the chances of reaching a final settlement to this conflict.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its call on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its hostile practices and an immediate end to its unlawful blockade of Gaza and open all crossings, pursuant to its international obligations, stop all illegal settlement activities in the occupied territories, and implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1860 (2009).

The State of Kuwait renews its demand that Israel implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which calls for its withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and its return to the borders of 4 June 1967. We affirm yet again that Israel's continued occupation of Syrian land constitutes a major obstacle to achieving peace and security in the Middle East.

The State of Kuwait renews its commitment to steadfastly support its brotherly country Lebanon in safeguarding its security and territorial integrity. Kuwait demands that Israel stop its continued violations of Lebanese airspace and territory and implement resolution 1701 (2006) by completely withdrawing from all remaining occupied Lebanese territory.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

The Assembly will recall what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in his opening remarks at the beginning of its sixty-seventh session:

> "The two-State solution is the only sustainable option, yet the door may be closing for good. The continued growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory seriously undermines efforts towards peace. We must break that dangerous impasse." (*A/67/PV.6, p. 3*)

That task must ultimately devolve upon the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations itself is founded on the principles of justice, peace, coexistence, security, fundamental human rights, human dignity and freedom. Each one of those has been established by practice and sustained by international law and norms. The principle of self-determination encompasses all of those principles and is the sole embodiment of the just and conscious expression of a people to their freedom, their rights and their dignity. Therefore, to deny that singular right is to deny all other rights.

Since 1947 the General Assembly and the Security Council have been seized of the situation in the Middle East. Specifically, in November 1967 the Security Council set forth the principles for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in resolution 242 (1967). Subsequent resolutions have reiterated the

determination of both the General Assembly and the Security Council to resolve the question of Palestine on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Consistent with those resolutions, Nigeria staunchly believes in the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independent statehood. Indeed, Nigeria recognized the State of Palestine in 1984 and has maintained uninterrupted diplomatic relations with the Government and people of Palestine. It is in that context that Nigeria voted in favour of the admission of Palestine to UNESCO as a full member State. That principle also informs our stance today.

Nigeria believes that the two-State solution is the best option to resolve the protracted conflict in the Middle East. We reaffirm the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security, without the threat of annihilation, within internationally agreed borders. In the same vein, we underscore the right of the people of Palestine to live in freedom and to exercise their right to self-determination with all the benefits of statehood.

As the world observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is fitting that today we have accorded Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. It is not only timely; it is right and it is just. Nigeria will continue to work assiduously with the parties concerned and all people of goodwill to ensure an enduring peace in the region.

Mr. Laher (South Africa): It is with great joy that we stand here today to congratulate the people of Palestine for attaining an enhanced observer State status in the United Nations. Although that is not what we would have ideally wanted, because we support full membership in the United Nations for the State of Palestine, it is satisfying that the Organization has now cemented in the books of history the fact that Palestine is indeed a State. It is a historic achievement on the road to the creation of a viable Palestinian State that should, ideally, be celebrated by all.

This year has historical significance because it marks 45 years since the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel. If the South African experience is anything to go by, we are certain that the Palestinians, with the assistance of the international community, will prevail in their quest for a viable State of their own. The United Nations and the rest of the international community should play their part in ensuring that the aspirations of the Palestinian people are fulfilled.

We call on the international community to avoid any retributive actions that could stifle the very existence of the State of Palestine. We say that in view of threats from some that there would be negative implications for Palestine and the United Nations flowing from the success of the resolution adopted today, as we witnessed last November when Palestine joined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The Middle East peace process, including the question of Palestine, has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than 60 years. It is an indictment on the conscience of the United Nations that after all these years there still has not been any significant movement towards the attainment of a permanent and sustainable solution to the long, drawn-out crisis. Despite attempts to inject life into the negotiation process, the prospects for direct negotiations get dimmer by the day, as the Israeli Government continues its counterproductive acts of aggression, particularly ongoing illegal settlement construction, home demolitions, illegal excavations of religious sites and restrictions on the access and movement of Palestinian people.

The illegal Israeli settlements have led to a fragmentation of the West Bank and the isolation of Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories, and continue to threaten the feasibility of a contiguous Palestinian State. The continued failure to take any meaningful action to halt the settlements only serves to undermine our commitment to a two-State solution.

The recent events in Gaza were disturbing. They are a reminder of how fragile the security situation is without the fulfilment of a sustainable solution. South Africa is pleased that the ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian groups in Gaza is holding after so many people, including women and children, lost their lives. The violence also resulted in the obliteration of critical infrastructure, such as schools and medical facilities, which will take a long time to rebuild due to the blockade of the enclave. South Africa welcomes the mediation efforts of the Government of Egypt, other countries, the League of Arab States and the Secretary-General, which led to the implementation of the ceasefire and the restoration of calm.

At this point it is appropriate to ask: Where was the Quartet during the crisis in Gaza? The Quartet's silence during that critical time justifies the criticism that its utility should be urgently addressed, with a view to reconfiguring, strengthening or perhaps disbanding

it. As part of the Quartet, the Members of the United Nations have an obligation to ask such questions, lest we become a docile partner in this equation.

Likewise, we must also register our disappointment that the Security Council did not act at an appropriate time. That prolonged the conflict, which led to the loss of more lives. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to respond to threats to international peace and security wherever they may arise, and without prejudice. United Nations meetings that only pay lip service to the Middle East peace process do not translate into meaningful action, nor do they advance peace.

South Africa calls on the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve a permanent and sustainable political solution, namely, the implementation of a viable two-State solution that provides for the establishment of a Palestinian State existing side by side in peace and security with Israel, within internationally recognized borders based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also call on those countries that have leverage with the parties to encourage them to choose the path of negotiations instead of the destructive path of conflict.

While we condemn the actions of some Palestinian groups that fire rockets into Israel that directly threaten its civilian population, including women and children, we wish to reiterate that the continued occupation of Palestine remains the root cause of the conflict. The international community's demand that Israel end the illegal blockade of Gaza, which has exacerbated the suffering of ordinary Palestinian people, must be met. The blockade of Gaza continues to have a negative impact on the lives of its inhabitants and has contributed directly to the increase in unemployment and poverty.

It has also resulted in delays in the provision of humanitarian assistance, since it has thwarted the entry into Gaza of humanitarian agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Development Programme. We therefore call on Israel to end the illegal blockade of Gaza in observance of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolutions, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative. In keeping with its practice of contributing to the alleviation of the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people, South Africa has donated the sum of 2 million rand to UNRWA.

Conflict between Israel and Palestine affects regional stability and has an impact on the fragile situation in the region. It thus becomes much more important that we find a resolution to the conflict.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that resolution 181 (II), adopted this very day 65 years ago, was a promissory note to the people of Israel and Palestine guaranteeing the creation of two States. Resolution 67/19, which we adopted today, is a further fulfilment of that promise. It proves that we cannot avoid the reality of an independent State of Palestine. It remains our responsibility to ensure that it is viable, contiguous and sustainable, so that it is in a position to live peacefully with its neighbour, the State of Israel. It is our duty to ensure that beyond today, the State of Palestine provides adequately for its population and enjoys the privileges that are inherent in statehood.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to congratulate Palestine today on being accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. Our sponsorship and support of the historic resolution 67/19, adopted today, represents our firm conviction that international recognition of a Palestinian State is one essential element of the main responsibility of the United Nations regarding the Palestinian question, which has remained unresolved for 65 years.

Today's resolution is fully consistent with other United Nations resolutions that have outlined the principles of a just solution to this question, in particular resolution 181 (II), which divided historic Palestine into two States, one Jewish and one Arab, and unleashed a series of events that radically changed the geographic and political situation of the entire Middle East. Those events included the establishment of an Israeli State more than six decades ago and Israel's later obstruction of all efforts aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State through its continued occupation of and dangerous policies in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967. They resulted in the prolongation of the suffering and tragedy of the Palestinian people, on the one hand, and had a negative impact on all efforts to consolidate regional and international peace and security, on the other.

We consider this historic recognition by the United Nations of the State of Palestine an important step towards settling the Palestinian question and

consolidating Palestinians' right to self-determination. It also represents an historic opportunity to overcome the political crisis and the no-peace situation that has resulted from Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian lands. We hope that it is a first step towards an independent State of Palestine's full membership in the United Nations, on an equal footing with all other States, since it is now recognized by an overwhelming majority of States Members of the Organization.

In the light of our deep concern about the stalemate in the peace negotiations, whose credibility has been put to the test by Israel's violations of its own commitments and obligations regarding the most basic legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and the terms of reference of the peace process, we urge the international community, especially the Quartet, to reactivate its initiative and efforts in that regard. We urge it to use its influence with Israel to immediately end its unilateral actions, which have caused the negotiations to stall.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns all hostile policies and serious acts of aggression committed by Israel to date, including its recent aggression against Gaza and deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians, including women and children. We urge the Quartet to reactivate its initiative and renew its efforts to pressure Israel to bring an immediate halt to all the unilateral actions that have obstructed peace negotiations. That should include the immediate cessation of all expansionist settlement projects and all efforts to change the demographic facts on the ground ahead of the final status negotiations.

Israel should also end all its other provocative illegal actions in East Jerusalem, including the demolition of homes, the confiscation of lands and water resources, the expulsion of Arab Palestinian inhabitants and other such demographic changes preceding final status negotiations. Such measures should help both parties to reach an agreement embodying a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, based on a two-State solution and within a specific time frame.

The United Arab Emirates will continue with its political support and development aid for the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, and for all other efforts aimed at achieving Palestinian national reconciliation, in order to enhance security and stability in the Middle East, a goal that can be achieved only through a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Such a settlement requires that Israel immediately end all its policies of aggression against the Palestinian people. It should begin with Israel's full withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the remaining occupied Lebanese territories. It should include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the principles of the Madrid peace process and relevant international law, particularly General Assembly resolution 181 (II), Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the two-State solution set out in the road map, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): Brazil congratulates Palestine on this special occasion and reaffirms its full support for and commitment to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Brazil has firmly supported the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people for a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, on the basis of the 1967 borders, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

Sixty-five years ago, on 29 November 1947, the United Nations took a historic decision. The General Assembly, presided over by Brazilian Ambassador Oswaldo Aranha, approved the establishment of two independent States in the Middle East. However, to this day the unresolved question of Palestine remains one of the most significant threats to international peace and security. As President Dilma Rousseff stated in her address at the opening of the sixty-seventh general debate in September,

> "only a free and sovereign Palestine will be able to fulfil Israel's legitimate desires for peace with its neighbours, security in its borders and regional political stability" (*A/67/PV.6, p. 9*).

A Palestinian State has become even more urgent in the light of the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. That illegal practice remains a serious obstacle to peace and to the realization of the two-State solution. Freezing settlement construction is, however, not enough. The occupation must end.

The establishment of the Palestinian State is also the right response to the violence that has shortened the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, in particular in the occupied Palestinian territories. The recent escalation of violence in Gaza is yet another reminder of the high human and political costs of the paralysis of the peace process. Brazil firmly rejects extremism and all forms of violence against the civilian population. We call upon all actors to fully commit to non-violence, dialogue and effective negotiations. We recall that all parties to the conflict have obligations under international humanitarian law and must fully abide by them. We also insist on the need to lift the Gaza blockade.

Brazil reiterates its call on the Security Council to fully carry out its responsibilities. The promotion of peace in the Middle East is in the interest of all Members of the United Nations and cannot be delegated to third parties. An inoperative Quartet and a silent Security Council do not serve the interests of peace in the Middle East. Turning to the United Nations, as President Abbas has done today, is part of a peaceful and multilateral approach, one that is fully consistent with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. In the light of the current obstacles to the immediate admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, we supported, as an interim measure, that Palestine be accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. We express our great satisfaction at the unequivocal show of support that that request received from the international community.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba firmly supports the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My country congratulates the Palestinian people and authorities on their victory in this Hall today on obtaining the new status of a non-member observer State.

With today's discussion on the situation of Palestine, we add to the long list of discussions in the United Nations that have not led to an effective solution that can put an end to Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people. Nor has it been possible, 45 years after the fact, to reverse Israel's 1967 occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy the international community with its permanent transgression of international norms and treaties, including a long list of resolutions by this Assembly and the Security Council. Nor has it heeded the repeated calls by the Secretary-General and other directives from international organizations to halt its illegal activities and its crimes against the Palestinian people.

Israel has continued and intensified its illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in violation of resolutions of the General Assembly, the Fourth Geneva Convention and its obligations under the arrangements set forth in the road map. Acts of violence by settlers against the civilian Palestinian population have increased without any measures to prevent them on the part of the occupying authorities, who have not taken the necessary legal steps to hold the perpetrators of such crimes responsible.

Israel has continued to build the illegal wall in the West Bank, including in occupied East Jerusalem and surrounding areas, in violation of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273). The restrictions have prevented the majority of Palestinians from accessing medical, educational and social services as well as markets and sacred sites in East Jerusalem. The situation of women and children in the region is alarming. Children face particularly serious difficulties, such as a high dropout rate and a low level of scholastic achievement, which are attributable to the poor educational infrastructure, the lack of classrooms and the physical, bureaucratic and other obstacles imposed in order to limit access to educational facilities.

Those facts reflect only a small part of the information that appears in reports and corroborates the seriousness of the facts on the ground. There is sufficient reason to adopt not only political measures of condemnation, such as those that the Assembly is prepared to approve yet again, but also binding Security Council decisions to stop Israel's crimes and to punish those responsible. We wonder why the Security Council is so passive and inactive before such overwhelming evidence, why it does not move to sanction the perpetration of crimes against the people of Palestine, why it does not deprive those responsible of the financial resources that support their acts and why it does not limit their freedom of movement. We wonder why NATO does not express concern at the constant trampling of the human rights of the Palestinian people as a result of Israel's aggression. That issue makes clear the hypocrisy and the double standard of certain developed countries that have proclaimed themselves champions of the defence of human rights. The United

States of America prevents the Security Council from condemning Israel, a very different treatment from that which it applies to countries of the South when they oppose and denounce its imperialist policies.

For eight whole days, we witnessed yet another escalation of violence and death that the Israel Defense Forces unleashed in the Gaza Strip. Yet again, Israel, using its military and technical superiority to brutally repress the Palestinian people, caused innocent civilian victims and enormous material damage, which has exacerbated the already precarious conditions for people living in that small, besieged territory.

Cuba reiterates its most strenuous condemnation of that new act of aggression against the people of Palestine and calls on the international community to urgently take all necessary measures to prevent such actions from happening again. Cuba repeats its firmest support for the just cause of the people of Palestine and for their inalienable rights, which include the creation of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Cuba also supports the decision of its Palestinian brothers and sisters to apply for entry of their State as a full member of the United Nations. Resolution 67/19, which we have just adopted, marks a historic moment and should be a first step towards the entry of Palestine as a full member of the Organization.

This morning, we celebrated once again the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, following a tradition that has brought us together every 29 November since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 32/40 B in 1977. In his usual message on that occasion, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba highlighted the undeniable proof of Palestine's commitment to the multilateral system, the progress of the authorities in strengthening State institutions, the robustness of those institutions and the ability of the Palestinians to exercise their sovereignty in an independent State. Likewise, he reiterated that the aggression against that fraternal people and the policy of illegal settlements have made it impossible to seek a just, balanced solution to the conflict.

Cuba reaffirms its determination to continue supporting the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for justice, dignity, peace and their right to self-determination in an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Allow me to recall some moving verses of the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish on the dramatic history of his people:

> "To our land,
> and it is the one far from the adjectives of nouns,
> the map of absence ...
> To our land, and it is a prize of war,
> the freedom to die from longing and burning
> and our land, in its bloodied night,
> is a jewel that glimmers for the far upon the far".

Venezuela was called by the chroniclers of the Indies the "land of grace". Sephardic Jews escaping from the Inquisition found refuge in our land. They came in search of freedom, peace and happiness. Since the early twentieth century, hundreds of Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians from other parts of the world have arrived in Venezuela, attracted by the hope of a new life in our country. Their contributions to Venezuelan science, arts and letters have been enormous. Followers of Judaism have also arrived in our lands and have contributed to the progress and greatness of our homeland. We look back on that historical record because the three great monotheistic religions have peacefully coexisted, which confirms the solid democratic tradition of our people. Several hundreds of thousands of descendants of the Arab immigration currently live in Venezuela, as well as thousands of Jews, who contribute their "all for one", as Lope de Vega said, to the forging of Bolívar's homeland. Venezuela is a country profoundly committed to the principles and values of liberty, sovereignty, independence, peace, peaceful coexistence and respect for international law. That is why the Venezuelan community supports the Palestinian cause.

The Bolivarian Government and the people of Venezuela have condemned the actions of the State of Israel against the people of Palestine. It is our hope that there will be no further victims in the land where the great religions preaching peace and love emerged. We hope for a new era in which swords will be beaten into plowshares, as Isaiah prophesied. The National Assembly of Venezuela, the highest body of the legislative branch, issued on Tuesday, 20 November, a statement condemning the recent attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and decided to join today's celebration of the

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Gaza Strip is, as the great American Jewish intellectual Noam Chomsky said, the largest open air prison in the world.

Sixty-five years have passed since hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes and lands. Since then, they have become refugees or members of a colonized and oppressed people. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which proposed the establishment of two States in the Palestinian territory. Scarcely a few days after the adoption of that resolution, a military offensive of territorial and demographic expansion began with the purpose of expelling Palestinians from their lands and preventing their return. The State of Israel was proclaimed unilaterally. On 15 May 1948, Al-Nakba began for the Palestinians. It was not only a process of expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people from their lands, but also an act of aggression against their cultural heritage and identity. A planned strategy to change the ethnic and cultural composition of the Palestinian territory was implemented.

A dense framework of inhuman policies was used to complete the segregation and control of Palestinians within the colonized territory. Laws were enacted and institutions were established that undermined the rights of Palestinians to their property and their land. With a proliferation of settlements in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank and the building of walls and checkpoints, the occupying Power has sought to permanently prevent or restrict the free movement of the Palestinian people. Thousands of Palestinian have been killed or imprisoned. At least 4,500 of them, including women and children, are in Israeli prisons. We call for their release. The occupying Power practices State terrorism. It has made Palestine a mourning and pain factory, violated international human rights law and international humanitarian law and failed to comply with hundreds of resolutions of the United Nations, which places the State of Israel on the fringes of international law.

The Israeli politico-military elite has committed many international crimes in Palestine. They have implemented apartheid, carried out ethnic cleansing, applied collective punishment to the civilian population and violated the Fourth Geneva Convention. They have also used weapons banned under international law on the civilian population. The war-mongering Israeli elite must therefore be held accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinian people. However, it is timely to remind those who intend to subjugate the heroic Palestinian people ad infinitum of the sentence in the book of Ecclesiastes that says, "all is vanity and grasping for the wind".

The General Assembly cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinian people brought about by the occupying Power. We pay tribute to the heroic Palestinian people and their historic leader, Yasser Arafat. The Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías has supported the application of Palestine for the status of observer State in the United Nations system and has sponsored the momentous resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". Today, we adopted that resolution by a broad majority, which grants the State of Palestine the status of permanent observer State. That is an important step on the road to its recognition as a Member State with full rights in the United Nations. Let us celebrate this historic decision taken by the General Assembly. Long live the free and sovereign Palestinian people.

Mr. Hassan (Malaysia): Malaysia would like to align itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Two weeks ago, Israel attacked the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The attack caused the deaths of more than 165 Palestinians and injured countless others. The story remains the same, with Israel, seeing itself as a victim of numerous rocket attacks launched from Gaza, responding with a massive application of military power to what it terms terrorists, including children, women and the elderly. We are appalled that the international community took one week to stop the brutal and aggressive act by Israel.

The Parliament of Malaysia, on 19 November, passed a resolution condemning those attacks and stated its unwavering support for the Palestinians. The Parliament also sought for the Security Council to fulfil its Charter responsibility and for Israel to be held accountable for the crimes committed against the Palestinians. I wish to take the opportunity to express my delegation's sincere condolences to the Palestinian people who lost their lives in the defence of their homeland.

The attack on Gaza was one of many countless acts that Israel has committed in violation of international law, and I believe that it will not be the last. Israel's

defiance of international law has been well illustrated in the report by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35). The report shows that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has not improved and that Israel continues to violate international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

The occupying Power has continued to systematically demolish Palestinian homes, displacing the people of the land and intensifying the illegal settlement activity. There were 589 Palestinian houses and buildings demolished during the reporting period. In 2011 alone, 110 Palestinian homes were destroyed by the occupying Power, resulting in the further displacement of the Palestinian people. What is clear is that Israel intends to change the demographic reality on the ground.

The occupying Power has further revoked the residency status of over 14,000 Palestinians from Jerusalem, without reason or recourse. They have been denied entry into Jerusalem and their right of movement, and have thereby been further displaced from their own land. Meanwhile, Israel continues construction of the separation wall that further hampers the Palestinians from freely moving within the occupied Palestinian territory.

The violations do not stop there. My delegation is appalled by the increasing number of incidents of settler violence. It has been reported that over 500,000 Israelis are now living in 144 new settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Even more, the violence includes hit-and-run incidents and destruction of private property, including agricultural land. We believe that such practices constitute methodical efforts aimed at removing Palestinians from their homeland.

I earlier highlighted the recent Israeli attack on Gaza. At the same time, the future of Gazans continues to be grim, with the blockade entering its sixth year. The socioeconomic impact has been devastating. The blockade has rendered 80 per cent of Gazans dependent upon humanitarian assistance. Also, 44 per cent are food insecure, and 13 per cent are experiencing malnutrition, while 39 per cent of the people in Gaza continue to live in poverty. The situation in the Gaza Strip is unsustainable. The lives of 1.6 million Gazans are indeed in jeopardy.

The international community must bring about change. Israel's impunity must be ended and the rule of law must prevail. The construction of illegal settlements by Israel violates international law. If Israel is committed to a two-State solution, the settlements have to be dismantled, and no more new illegal settlements should ever be built on Palestinian land.

Israel must also realize the need to immediately lift the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip and allow the flow of supplies, materials and humanitarian aid to reach the people. Israel must accept that a lasting and just solution to the question of Palestine would not only benefit the Palestinians, but would contribute to Israel's own safety and security in the long run.

The international community must continue to support all of the recommendations submitted in the report of the Committee on its work for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulting in the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State living side by side with Israel, in peace and security, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

Today is an important day for all of us. We are observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I would like to take the opportunity to pay Malaysia's utmost respect and tribute to the Palestinian people for their courage and strength in continuing to demonstrate steadfastness, despite the immense hardship they face on a daily basis.

In solidarity with the people of Palestine, Malaysia reiterates its unwavering support of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. Malaysia fully supports the Palestinian application for membership in the United Nations, as it did with regard to its non-member State observer status in the United Nations.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by conveying our congratulations to the fraternal people of Palestine. We congratulate the Palestinians on their victory today through the efforts of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. The adoption of resolution 67/19 by an absolute majority of the Assembly and on the strength of conscience, justice, fairness, patience is a new affirmation of the justice of the Palestinian cause, a justice that was beyond doubt.

The international community reaffirmed its commitment to a just cause that is recognized by all in order to meet the legitimate aspirations and hopes of

the Palestinian people. In that regard, Syria supports the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to create a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and within the borders of 1967.

Palestine should be accorded full United Nations Member State status. The return of Palestinian refugees to their motherland should be guaranteed, as should the payment of fair reparations for all the suffering that has been endured, in accordance with resolution 194 (III), of 1948. We also recall resolution 273 (III), of 1949, which defines the conditions of Israel's membership in the United Nations and calls upon it to consistently uphold the principles of the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations. It also affirms the right of the Palestinian people to create an independent State and highlights the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land, from which they were expelled by Zionist gangs. We call for reparations to be paid for those damages.

When Israel's membership in the United Nations was accepted, note was taken in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), of the commitment of Israel's representatives to implementing and fully upholding those resolutions. Israel's accession to the United Nations was contingent upon its commitment to the relevant United Nations resolutions on the creation of a Palestinian State and the return of its refugees. Unfortunately, however, that commitment has been deliberately and blatantly flouted in all settlement mechanisms of the Palestinian question and of all pending issues with respect to Israel. That is because of the public support of some powerful States, which are well known to all and which today voted against the resolution. That only encourages Israel to continue to thumb its nose at the international community and not comply with the relevant provisions of United Nations resolutions.

Israel continues its hostile practices and refuses peace. It sees itself as a State above the law and enjoys impunity. Those who protect Israel have affirmed to the Israeli authorities that they are above the law and that they will be protected within and beyond the United Nations and that their violations will go unpunished.

The Israeli occupation has turned the just Palestinian question into a simple series of numbers — victims, wounded, refugees. The Israeli authorities have engaged blindly in a war of hatred against the Palestinian people. They have imposed an unjust colonization and settlement policy against the Palestinian people, which is unjustifiable and has been passed over in silence by those who protect Israel.

More than 1,400 martyrs, including 437 children, were killed by the Israeli occupation forces during the barbarous attacks that took place in Gaza in late 2008. It is surprising that the Israeli incursion and the inhuman embargo imposed on the Palestinian people and land over several years were not enough for the Israeli authorities and did not satisfy their hatred. We are not talking about an embargo or blockade against Gaza alone, but about one against the entire Palestinian territory. The Israeli authorities resumed their barbarous aggressions against Gaza recently, leading to the deaths of more than 166 Palestinians, including several women and children, as we all know.

Israel has thus added to its black list a new crime against the peoples and States of the region, committed over the course of more than 60 years, during which time the Arab people have suffered occupation in Palestine, the occupied Syrian Golan and Lebanon. These people have suffered the worst war crimes, violations of human rights, forced displacements and other egregious crimes. It is the Palestinian people's right to live as other peoples in the world, in peace, freedom and dignity. However, that will prove impossible so long as Israel pursues its policies of aggression and continues to flout United Nations resolutions.

If some powerful States continue to bring pressure to bear so as to prevent the Palestinian people from enjoying their rights, and continue to support the blind and irresponsible occupation, imposing their narrow political agenda within the international Organization by sacrificing the principles of morality, justice and international law, their actions will undermine what remains of the credibility of the United Nations and threaten the very basis for collective work in the international arena, particularly in the area of international peace and security.

The picture is clear today — the Palestinian cause is a just one. We have borne witness to Israel's isolation through its aggressive policies, including those of occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people for more than six decades. Those policies can no longer be protected by Israel's partners. They have failed. Today, in the face of justice, the liars, the perpetrators of human rights violations, and all those who have worked against democracy have failed. Those who voted against resolution 67/19 laid bare their disingenuous policy

and political hypocracy with regard to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We continue to repeat, and shall do so today, that Israel should not occupy other people's land, attack others, or impose injustice and oppression on the Palestinian people. Israel would have been unable to carry out such policies without the support and protection of its partners, who have provided weapons, justified or obfuscated the occupation and aggression, and concealed human rights violations perpetrated by Israel since the 1950s. Those same partners, protectors and sponsors of the Israeli State attempt to justify Israel's refusal to participate in the Helsinki Conference, aimed at making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, a decision that was reached unanimously at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is increasingly clear that this is the picture we are facing today. Palestinians know who are their friends and who are their true enemies.

Those who voted against today's resolution are against the man who is indeed the Palestinian Gandhi, President Abbas. Those individuals have decided not to support President Abbas's moderation. How can we trust those States when they talk about upholding international law and international humanitarian law, as well as human rights in general and the rule of law? They point to these lofty principles but merely use such expressions rhetorically. What they are doing in reality is undermining the States and peoples who choose not to support their arrogance and oppression of justice among States Members of the United Nations.

We salute the Palestinian people and congratulate the Palestinian Authority, which, thanks to its political struggle and endeavours, has been able to defend the just nature of the Palestinian cause. But there is still work to be done. True justice means according Palestine full Member status; that will be justice. Today our Palestinian brothers are halfway to attaining that full right. We congratulate them once more.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, Permanent Representative of Senegal, for his tireless efforts at the head of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I would also like to commend the Division for Palestinian Rights at the United Nations for providing information on all aspects of the Palestinian question.

Morocco associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of Djibouti, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

We welcome the General Assembly's adoption by a large majority of resolution 67/19, which grants Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. We believe that to be another critical step on the right path to realizing Palestinian aspirations to full and complete membership of the United Nations, for which we hope we will see the necessary political will, and to its establishment as an independent and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. On this happy occasion, I would like, on behalf of the King, Government and people of Morocco, to extend our sincere congratulations to the Palestinian people, wherever they may be, on this historic achievement.

In a message sent by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the eve of this meeting, His Majesty reiterated:

> "Today the United Nations is called upon to shoulder its responsibility and to accept Palestine as a non-member State. I wish to take this opportunity to renew my full support for the Palestinian National Authority, under the leadership of my revered brother His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, on the occasion of the auspicious step he is taking. The Kingdom of Morocco calls for the mobilization of international support to back the measures taken by the Palestinian National Authority in order to obtain non-member Status. My country is of the view that negotiation is the best way to reclaim the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and set up an independent sovereign State".

The Assembly's resolution, adopted at this historic moment, embodies the firm will of the international community to effectively realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East that will end the occupation and realize the two-State vision. That important step is the logical result of the stalemate in the peace process, following the expiration of the deadline set to reach a peaceful settlement on the basis of a two-State solution, specified by the international community here before the General Assembly. That effort on the part of the Palestinians is also the culmination of tireless Palestinian efforts to establish the basic tenets of an independent State, with functioning institutions,

and which have thus encouraged more than 135 countries to recognize it. Those efforts have also led to regional and international organizations recognizing and commending the effectiveness of Palestinian institutions, despite the challenges they face in assuming their responsibilities to the Palestinian people and the international community.

Today's resolution, which the Palestinian Authority has been working towards, enjoys the support of all Palestinian forces without exception, thus establishing another focus for efforts towards the long-sought goal of Palestinian national reconciliation. This is an occasion that may perhaps help to heal the wounds of the Palestinians of Gaza after the inhumane eight days of aggressive Israeli raids — aggression that has not let up for years.

We welcome the ceasefire and commend the efforts of the regional and international parties that have helped to secure it, but we hope that the international community will mobilize efforts to deal with the consequences of Israel's aggression against Gaza and to help Palestinian civilians return to their normal daily lives. We also look forward to the possibility that the ceasefire will encourage continued regional and international efforts to deal with the situation in Gaza through a new approach, leading to the opening of the border crossings, allowing the movement of people and goods, and ending the unjust blockade against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

At the same time, we stress the importance of continuing to support Palestinian refugees through United Nations programmes and agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, with adequate means in order to meet the basic needs of Palestinian people in the territories where they operate.

This year has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of settlements in the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories. Settlements are the intractable obstacle to negotiations. The Israeli occupying Power has used its legal arsenal and military might, as well as its settlers, to change the demographic facts on the ground and to further annex Palestinian territories. As part of the same policies of aggression, East Jerusalem has witnessed extremely serious developments whereby the rate of settlement building has increased and military posts and tourist projects, as well as Government and civil institutions, have have been established — further steps aimed at isolating the city from its Arab and Palestinian environment. The King of Morocco, as Chairman of the OIC Jerusalem Committee, reiterates its strong condemnation of the accelerating settlement activities in Jerusalem, the birthplace of the three heavenly religions.

We reiterate our strong support of the Palestinian people in general, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in particular, in their peaceful struggle to hold on to their land, city and holy sites. We are deeply concerned by the stalemate in negotiations caused by Israeli policies of colonialism. However, we hold on to peace as a strategic option, and we strongly believe that the path towards peace must not be abandoned. We look forward to the dynamic that will be generated by international moves to put an end to the aggression against Gaza. We also welcome resolution 67/19 and other great developments in the Middle East. We hope that all of those developments will create a new, effective and serious approach to breaking the unprecedented stalemate in the peace process before it is too late.

Developments in the Arab region have inaugurated a new era in which peoples have regained their ability to contribute to their present and their future. It is in Israel's interest not to misread those developments. It should become actively involved by making efforts to create a just and comprehensive peace that ensures the realization of the legitimate Palestinian rights to establish their own independent and sovereign State within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. It should work for a final and permanent peace that provides security for all people in the region and pave the way for further withdrawal from other occupied Lebanese and Syrian territories.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we would like to reiterate our full support for the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people to put an end to their suffering. We would like to reiterate our support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their rights to self-determination, to rid themselves of Israeli occupation, and to establish their own independent, sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

My delegation would like, at the outset, to congratulate the people and Government of Palestine for the historic decision by the United Nations to grant Palestine the status of non-member observer State as a prelude to attaining full membership. We are confident that granting the status of non-member observer State

will enable Palestine to play its role as a peace-loving nation committed to international law and instruments and as a factor for peace and stability in the region and the world.

The Palestinian people continue to live under occupation, violence and aggression, committed not only by the Israeli army but also by extremist settlers who are systematic in their aggression, while the occupying Power turns a blind eye and the international community remains alarmingly silent, condoning Israel's flagrant violations and not holding it accountable for its actions.

Israel's continued aggression against the Palestinian people and its fait-accompli policies encourage settlers to commit daily acts of aggression against Palestinians and their properties. Israel seeks through such practices to shirk its international commitments and to alter the demographic facts on the ground, changing the nature of East Jerusalem and its environs to remove their Islamic and Arab character, and to further annex Palestinian territories in a way that would make any future resolution based on a two-State solution impossible.

The blatant aggression experienced in Gaza, the continuing deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinian people there, and the absence of a firm international position on Israel's repeated violations of international law and resolutions are evils the Palestinians in Gaza can no longer tolerate. In that context, the international community is called upon to take serious measures to break the stalemate in the negotiations on the just Palestinian cause and to relaunch negotiations based on international legitimacy and the terms of reference.

International efforts in recent years have focused on managing the conflict, but they have proven inadequate, and there is an urgent need to take serious steps to deal with the substantive issues. We must work together and direct our joint efforts towards creating a new dynamic to deal with the basic, substantive issues of the conflict.

We are all aware that the two-State solution is an important basis for any serious peaceful attempt to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. That concept is based not on a vacuum, but on the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations and regional Powers. We must work hard to implement those resolutions. We are confident that it is still possible for the international community to put an end to the stalemate in the peace negotiations and to revive and give new momentum to the peace process. In that context, we hope that the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly and the Security Council, will continue to shoulder their historic responsibility in this sensitive time for the Palestinian question by focusing on the basic issues and working to settle the conflict through redoubled peace efforts.

Mr. Shaanika (Namibia): I thank you, Madame, for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on this important agenda item. This afternoon, we had the privilege to welcome Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, to the General Assembly, and we congratulate him on the status and support he and his people received today.

While my delegation aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Senegal on behalf of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, allow me also to make additional comments on behalf of my country, Namibia.

Today we observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to highlight the plight of the people of Palestine, who for many years have endured great hardship under the Israeli occupation. It is our conviction that occupation of any territory by force is a moral scourge and politically unacceptable. In the twenty-first century, people everywhere on planet Earth are supposed to enjoy life in larger freedom and be guaranteed the right to determine their own future.

Today we adopted resolution 67/19, regarding the status of Palestine in the United Nations. The resolution tests the sincerity and commitment of all States Members of the United Nations to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the Organization. The people of Palestine have a genuine desire to exercise their right to self-determination. As a people who once lived under occupation and was subjected to the brutal apartheid system, we in Namibia know very well how it feels to live under foreign domination and dehumanization by the occupying Power. People in occupied territories are dispossessed of everything and live in constant fear of uncertainty. Quite often they watch the bulldozers tearing their houses down and their means of livelihood being destroyed. They watch helplessly as settlements are built on their land and walls of annexation erected.

We in Namibia have followed with great concern the confiscation of land and destruction of homes to make room for new Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. Yet, when the people of Palestine come to the United Nations to seek recognition, they are told that it is counterproductive to the peace process. One is left to wonder whether there is any grain of sincerity in the argument that seeking recognition of Palestine in the United Nations is counterproductive to the peace process. One is tempted to ask how support for the resolution adopted today and the call to end the illegal occupation of the Palestinian land can be considered counterproductive to the realization of a two-State solution. What about such provocative actions as the displacement of Palestinians, the mass detention of children, and the destruction of homes and means of livelihood? Do such actions contribute to the peace process?

In our view, the resolution we have adopted today is meant to enhance efforts leading to the creation of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, which will coexist with Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders. My delegation does not consider voting in favour of the resolution to be counterproductive to the peace process, which has in any case has been at a standstill for the past few years.

As long as the people of Palestine are denied the right to self-determination, Namibia will continue to extend its unwavering support to and solidarity with them. We fully support the aspiration of Palestine not only in what they have achieved today, but we look forward to the day when the State of Palestine will finally join this family of sovereign and independent nations. The rights of the people of Palestine do not come from the generosity of the occupying Power; those rights are inherently endowed from birth.

Every country represented here in this assembly of nations is sovereign in its own right. Therefore, the action we take should be guided by our moral conscience in line with international law, and not by threat or fear of perceived threats. If we subject our action to fear, then our moral conscience will be taken hostage by the forces of fear. The Charter of the United Nations calls on all of us "to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". It does not call for division through weakness and fear.

As we supported the resolution adopted today, we call on all the Palestinians and Israelis to find the courage to commit themselves to peace so that, when peace is finally achieved, they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.46

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

46th plenary meeting
Friday, 30 November 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal, Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*spoke in French*): Yesterday, 29 November, we celebrated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As President Mahmoud Abbas recalled, that date was no accident. It has strong historical resonance. It was on 29 November 1947 that 33 Member States, meeting in the Borough of Queens in what had been a World's Fair pavilion, decided to partition Palestine. Of the two States they envisaged, one was created and became a Member of the United Nations. Yesterday, at its 44th meeting, the General Assembly decided to perfect its undertaking by recognizing the other entity as a State.

Thanks to the overwhelming support of the international community, the journey of the Palestinian people to freedom and to the building of an independent State took a new turn. Although the path has been difficult and the sacrifices many, the efforts have not been in vain. That overwhelming vote is proof that the perseverance of the Palestinians in working towards a negotiated settlement is the best guarantee for peace in the region of the Middle East. It is therefore with pride that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People sees the delegation of Palestine take its rightful seat in the General Assembly with the status of a non-member observer State.

I would also like to congratulate the Palestinian people and their leaders, especially President Mahmoud Abbas, for the courage and patience they have shown. To the Palestinian people, who pursued their dream despite hardships and other privations, I wish harmony and prosperity. But more than anything, I wish them a new perspective for peace with Israel and all the peoples of the region.

On behalf of the Committee, I would also like to thank all members who voted for resolution 67/19. It is an important victory for all the forces of peace and can contribute to political modernization in the region for the benefit of all of its peoples.

I would now like to introduce to the Assembly the four draft resolutions adopted by the Committee and circulated under this agenda item, namely, draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The first three draft resolutions concern the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information. They reaffirm the important mandates entrusted to those entities by the General Assembly. As in the past, the Committee will ensure the rational use of the resources made available to it. Naturally, the three draft resolutions have been updated.

The fourth draft resolution, A/67/L.20, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", reiterates the position of the General Assembly with regard to the essential elements of such a settlement and includes references to the developments of the past year.

The four draft resolutions that I have just introduced outline positions, mandates and programmes that are of particular importance at the present crucial juncture. While the draft resolutions on a peaceful settlement and the special information programme traditionally enjoy overwhelming support from members, the voting on the draft resolutions concerning the Committee and the Division, in which a sizeable group of members abstains, could be improved.

Advocating for the coexistence of two States means supporting the only body set up by the General Assembly with that goal, namely, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Committee recalls that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner, in accordance with international legitimacy. In pursuing our common objectives, the Committee counts on the cooperation of all members. Consequently, I hope that the General Assembly will vote in favour of these four draft resolutions with a majority that speaks of the correctness of the goals they are pursuing.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malta, Mr. Christopher Grima, in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the report of the Committee.

Mr. Grima (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Allow me, at the outset, to join previous speakers in congratulating the delegation of Palestine on having been granted non-member observer State status in the General Assembly.

It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee, which is contained in document A/67/35. Allow me to summarize each section of the report.

After the introduction, the report outlines, in chapters II and III, the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contains information on the organization of the Committee's work during the year.

In chapter IV, the report reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine as monitored by the Committee and contains a detailed factual account of developments that have taken place in the period under review, which ended on 7 October. The most recent events will be reflected in the next report.

Chapter V contains the action taken by the Committee, including the Chairman's participation in General Assembly and Security Council debates, statements issued by the Committee and its Bureau and the continued dialogue between the Committee and members of intergovernmental organizations. Chapter V also reports on the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee, as well as other mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Chapter VI provides an overview of the work done over the year by the Department of Public Information pursuant to resolution 66/16, of 30 November 2011.

The last chapter contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, in which the Committee expresses its concern that the momentum towards the two-State solution appears to have dissipated due to Israel's continued expansion of its illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and its refusal to commit to the long-standing parameters of the peace process. The Committee expresses its view that progress on the Palestinian status at the United Nations will generate a new dynamic in the peace process and help safeguard the two-State solution, as will the recognition of the State of Palestine by additional Member States.

The Committee calls on the international community to take serious and concrete action that will compel Israel to stop its illegal settlement activities and to genuinely commit to ending its 45-year military occupation of the Palestinian territory and to making peace. The Committee also calls on members of the Security Council to undertake a mission to the region to examine the situation at first hand and to contribute tangibly to the efforts to advance a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

In addition, the Committee calls on donors to meet their prior commitments and provide emergency aid to the Palestinian people. The Committee calls on all Palestinian factions to unite behind the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas for a good-faith implementation of national reconciliation agreements, which is a prerequisite for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

The Committee expresses its deep concern about the ongoing violence and the gross violations of humanitarian and human rights law and reiterates its condemnation of all attacks against civilians, including rocket fire from Gaza, air strikes on populated areas and settler violence. It calls on the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to act urgently to guarantee the protection of civilians.

The Committee reiterates that any sustainable recovery of the Palestinian economy requires the dismantlement of the Israeli occupation and its associated regime of settlements, checkpoints, the separation wall, demolitions, land confiscations and expulsions. Those have been on the rise, with the worst abuses occurring in East Jerusalem and in Area C. In that regard, the Committee calls for the transfer of additional territories in Area C to the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, as envisaged in the Oslo Accords.

The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2013 on widening international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return to their homes and property. It will also seek to strengthen international support for the permanent status negotiations and contribute to the creation of a favourable international atmosphere for their conduct in good faith. The Committee also supports global campaigns to challenge Israeli impunity and promote the concept of Israeli accountability for its actions towards the Palestinian people.

The Committee will continue to highlight the plight of the most disadvantaged Palestinians, such as the Palestine refugees, Palestinians living in Gaza and Palestinian political prisoners, and to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to facilitate the viability of the Palestinian State. The Committee will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth and their organizations in that process.

The Committee will continue to encourage civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliaments and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine. It will continue to assess its programme of cooperation with civil society and consult them on ways to enhance their contribution. The Committee will also strive to further develop cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations.

The Committee requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities. It should pay special attention to the continued development of the "Question of Palestine" website and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. The Committee also requests the Division to further develop the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority and to continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Finally, the Committee expresses its view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and public opinion of the relevant issues, and requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility, as warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the report that I have just introduced will be of assistance to the General Assembly in its deliberations on the question of Palestine.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is proud to have been one of the 70 sponsors of resolution 67/19, which was adopted with a view to recognizing Palestine as a non-member observer State in the United Nations, because it represents a historic step by the international community with respect to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian State, recognized as such by 132 Members of the United Nations, including the Argentine Republic. However, that resolution is only one additional step towards the long overdue decision that the Organization has yet to take, namely, Palestine's admission as a Member State of the United Nations.

The requirements for the admission of new Members are clearly established in paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, which represents the consensus of the international community and enshrines the principle of the sovereign equality of all States — a necessary condition to promote, protect and ensure international peace and security, the full force of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and true democracy.

On 23 September 2011, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, presented to the United Nations Palestine's request for admission as a full Member and signed a declaration by which he accepted the relevant obligations under the Charter (see A/66/PV.19). But, although in November of the same year UNESCO approved Palestine's admission as a member, the General Assembly was still not able to take the decision to admit Palestine into the Organization, because considerations not related to the requirements established in the Charter meant that the Security Council provided no recommendation to the General Assembly.

Based on its firm belief in the sovereign equality of States, Argentina, from the inception of the Organization, has been clear in its support for the universality of the United Nations, so as to include all States that meet the requirements set out in the Charter of the United Nations — the binding instrument representing the covenant of peaceful coexistence of the international community.

Likewise, it is worth recalling that Argentina advocated since the founding of the Organization that the right of veto of the permanent members of the Security Council could not be exercised with respect to the admission of new Members. It should also be recalled that even the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion supported by Argentina, determined that the conditions for the admission of a Member were exhaustive and that.

> "[t]he political character of an organ cannot release it from the observance of the treaty provisions established by the Charter when they constitute limitations on its powers or criteria for its judgment".

The Organization cannot ignore Palestine's statehood status in the context of the exercise of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Argentina was not alone in supporting the resolution adopted. The heads of State and Government of the Southern Common Market expressed their support for the application of the State of Palestine to acquire the status granted to it yesterday by the General Assembly.

Finally, the international community has definitely become aware of the value of that which should be considered the first right of peoples, namely, the right to peace. The Palestinian and Israeli peoples have the right to live in peace. My country, Argentina, and the Assembly, which is the multilateral arena par excellence, clearly support that right. Therefore, as the President of Argentina, Mrs. Cristina Fernández, has said:

> "Today we reiterate our conviction of the need to continue the negotiation process in order to achieve a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict. that contemplates an independent and viable Palestinian State."

No people chooses war. All peoples wish to live in peace.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): First of all, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made at the 45th meeting by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation considers the convening of today's plenary meeting on agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine", to be very timely, as it coincides with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The establishment of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 30 years ago, was an important occasion that

reflected the aspiration of the international community to an early solution of the Palestinian question.

On this important occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, my delegation joins the international community in extending its unwavering support to, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people's just cause of regaining its territory and establishing an independent State. My delegation was a sponsor of the resolution and yesterday it aligned with the majority of Member States in voting in favour of resolution 67/19, on Palestine's status. We once again welcome and congratulate Palestine on having received an absolute majority in recognition of its statehood at the United Nations.

Unfortunately, it is very regrettable that the Palestinian issue has not yet been resolved, despite the unreserved support and efforts of the international community. Israel continues its aggressive policy of illegal occupation of the Arab territories, expanding settlements, blockading the Gaza Strip and indiscriminately killing civilians, thereby challenging the international community. Furthermore, Israel, the occupying Power, recently escalated military attacks against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, killing many innocent civilians, including women and children.

Nevertheless, the Security Council, whose main responsibility is to protect international peace and security, has turned its face away from Israeli atrocities without taking any appropriate measures. That is a typical expression of the United States double standard, whereby it takes sides with Israel, seriously damaging the Council's credibility. We strongly denounce the unpardonable Israeli criminal acts of wantonly violating the sovereignty of Palestine and seriously disturbing peace and security in the Middle East.

Establishing the independent State of Palestine is an inalienable sovereign right of the Palestinian people. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea recognized Palestine as an independent sovereign State in 1988 and established full diplomatic relations with it. Since then, it has extended unreserved support and solidarity to the Palestinian people's struggle to establish their independent State. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue its unwavering support for the Palestinian and Arab people and will stand firm with them in their just cause.

If the Palestinian issue is to be settled and lasting peace is to be maintained in the Middle East, the aggressive and hostile Israeli acts against the Palestinian people must be terminated and the Palestinian people's legitimate national right to establish an independent State must be realized. The legitimate status of Palestine as a State Member of the United Nations should be granted as early as possible, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of peace and security. It is also the view of my delegation that the Security Council should give due attention to Palestinian membership, which is now on the international agenda, so that it may be realized without further delay, since more than two thirds of the Member States have already officially recognized Palestine as a State.

My delegation avails itself of this opportunity to reaffirm its unvarying support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just cause of regaining their legitimate national rights, including the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

Mrs. Mørch Smith (Norway): Yesterday, an overwhelming majority of the Member States voted in favour of upgrading Palestine to non-member observer State in the General Assembly. That is a milestone, and truly historic. It is a tribute to those who have chosen the path of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through peaceful and diplomatic means. It is also a tribute to the Partition Plan, adopted by the General Assembly 65 years ago, and to the two-State solution

Resolution 67/19, adopted yesterday, was not a unilateral step by the Palestinians. The resolution was carefully balanced and sends a clear message that the Palestine Liberation Organization and President Abbas are genuinely committed to resuming negotiations on the basis of the two-State solution. Time is more than ripe for all Palestinians to embrace that nonviolent approach. A unified Palestine will stand stronger, and President Abbas' clear reaffirmation that Palestine will adhere strictly to the Charter of the United Nations and respect fundamental human rights principles is welcomed.

Yesterday's decision also underscores that the international community recognizes that Palestinian institutions have passed the threshold for a functioning State. Norway is committed to continued efforts to empower Palestinian institutions. However, the current

crisis in the Palestinian economy is of great concern. The financial imbalance in the Palestinian economy is in danger of becoming chronic and will be increasingly difficult to resolve if no adequate measures are taken.

It is in the interest of us all to secure a viable economy in Palestine. The task of international donors will not be completed until the Palestinian economy can prosper and fiscal independence can be ensured. An economic collapse will endanger institutional progress and severely exacerbate the welfare of the Palestinian people. That could strengthen political forces that are not committed to a peaceful settlement and reject negotiations as the way forward.

The occupation severely hampers economic development. A self-sustaining Palestinian economy cannot be achieved as long as the occupation remains in place and illegal settlements continue to expand, encircling East Jerusalem and undermining the very concept of a two-State solution.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The ceasefire in Gaza is fragile and deserves our full support in order to make it durable. Decisions to lift restrictions on goods, construction items and personnel should be taken without further delay and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Such initiatives would make the ceasefire more robust and help us move forward towards normalization in the Gaza Strip. That will also have a strengthening effect on moderate political forces and will weaken those who choose violence. Egypt's key role in achieving a ceasefire agreement is very encouraging.

While we may have times of quiet, times where hostilities are absent, we will not achieve true peace unless the parties, through negotiations and compromises, reach a political settlement. Yesterday's result is encouraging. It should be interpreted as a call for action and not as an excuse to yet again postpone negotiations. Clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. It is also imperative that unilateral acts on the ground, which undermine confidence and take the parties further from negotiations, be avoided. President Abbas, in his speech at the 44th meeting yesterday, underscored that he will act responsibly and positively in the next steps. That should be respected.

Regardless of how we cast our vote yesterday, we all need to come together and bring forward the efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiations. Those negotiations should start immediately.

Mr. Faizal (Maldives): On this historic occasion in 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), on the partition of Palestine, thus creating one of the most complex and elusive challenges that the modern world has faced so far. Yet again, we find ourselves in this very Hall, lamenting the lack of progress in a now moribund peace process and decrying the deficiency of international political will to help realize what was conceived all those years ago — a story of two States, a world where both Palestine and Israel could coexist, within secure and recognized borders.

As we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to reiterate the solidarity of my Government and that of all Maldivians with the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination. Even in this difficult hour, as smoke rises from the ruins of Gaza and the grave humanitarian crisis is once again laid bare for the world to see, the Maldives will not waver in its steadfast support for Palestine, nor will it retreat from condemning the serious injustices committed in the occupied territories as recently as last week.

The Maldives welcomes the statement by the President of the State of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, delivered yesterday afternoon in the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.44). We commend his extraordinary vision and his leadership of the Palestinian people in the face of an endless struggle for freedom.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts in the compilation of his report (A/67/364), in accordance with Assembly resolution 66/17. We would also like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report (A/67/35) and for its commendable achievements over the past years.

The observations in the reports to the General Assembly once again demonstrate that a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine and the wider Arab-Israeli conflict lies in a two-State solution — two States living side by side on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as their shared capital. They also show that efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement are being quickly eroded by the lack of trust between

the two sides for resuming direct negotiations and an alarming lack of confidence in the peace process itself.

The Maldives strongly backed the initiative by the Palestinians last year for full membership in the United Nations. We did so fully adhering to the view that it was long overdue for Palestine to be an equal among nations and to join an international family that has passionately supported the struggle of all Palestinians. Furthermore, we hold a strong belief in the conviction that their right to self-determination must be fully realized. Statehood will bring the sense of leadership, responsibility and obligation that surrounds the business of governance. The restoration of Palestinian rights would also alleviate to some extent their socioeconomic problems — a crumbling infrastructure and decades of psychological and material damage endured under occupation.

While an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine is the ultimate objective, we believe that granting the status of non-member observer State in the General Assembly is a landmark achievement. My delegation was pleased to join the list of sponsors of resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations", which was adopted with an overwhelming level of support and endorsement by the United Nations membership.

My Government hails the ceasefire that recently came into effect between Hamas and Israel. We commend the Egyptian Government, the United States and the United Nations for their exemplary leadership in preventing a further escalation of the crisis. Military strikes on highly populated areas in Gaza took the lives of many innocent civilians, including women and children, adding to the layers of destruction and rubble left by years of hardship, the illegal Israeli blockade and ground invasions of recent memory. We also call upon Hamas to cease all rocket attacks on the State of Israel and to respect and uphold the ceasefire agreement so as to avoid further bloodshed and suffering.

Israel's expansion of illegal settlements undermines peace efforts and is at the crux of the current stalemate faced by the global community. Despite international outrage and multiple calls to cease all settlement activity immediately, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to operate with total impunity, making a mockery of international humanitarian and human rights law. The forced eviction of Palestinians and the demolition of their homes to make way for Israeli settlers could not be described as anything other than an outright illegal seizure of territory by an occupying Power. In the pursuit of meaningful negotiations and a lasting peace, the onus is on Israel, as the occupying Power, to demonstrate its compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, to cease all illegal settlement activity in the occupied territories.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Maldives to support all international efforts to seek a just and comprehensive settlement to the question of Palestinian statehood, including all final status issues. The urgency of achieving that objective is evident, as the Palestinians find themselves surrounded by Arab freedom movements. Both fight for common goals — a sacred belief that their destiny should be squarely in their own hands, and a better world for future generations. Both also believe that having the responsibility to govern would bring pragmatism and accountability for their own actions. The resolution adopted yesterday is an important step in that direction. It is time for the Palestinians to achieve statehood and to decide their future free from occupation, intimidation and aggression.

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation endorses the statement made at the 45th meeting by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Just yesterday, we adopted resolution 67/19, according Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. My country was a sponsor of that resolution, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Palestinian people on that auspicious occasion. As many of us have said, it is a critical issue of global justice and a defining test for the Organization to move in that direction. Member States must therefore further work towards the Palestinians' being able to realize their inalienable rights, including the rights of return and self-determination, as well as their earnest aspirations to freedom, prosperity, peace and justice in an independent, sovereign State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We must acknowledge that the Palestinian people's acquisition of a new status and new rights in the United Nations as a recognized State does not negate their firm commitment to resolve the conflict through dialogue and peaceful means. We are well aware of their suffering and struggle over the past several decades,

without any glimpse of hope, while the international community could not take decisive action at the level where it mattered most.

Over time, we have seen the growing ability of the Palestinian Authority to establish the necessary institutional foundations for the international recognition of Palestinian statehood, as endorsed by all major international organizations and institutions. We commend the Palestinians for making that heroic effort, despite the grave obstacles and challenges imposed on them.

The continued illegal settlement activity and destruction of properties, homes and economic institutions in the occupied land not only cause the deterioration of the already critical socioeconomic situation that the Palestinian population face, but also constitute a breach of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as impeding the peace process and opportunities for negotiation. Therefore, those provocative acts should stop immediately.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic wishes to see a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Quartet road map, which envisages a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with the Jewish State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders. We therefore call upon the parties to resume and accelerate direct peace negotiations towards the conclusion of a final peaceful settlement on that basis.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has long recognized the State of Palestine, and I wish to reaffirm its consistent support for the Palestinian people in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine that is a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. I take this opportunity to commend the role and work of United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to assist millions of Palestinian people in need over all these many years amid multiple difficulties. We also wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble endeavour for a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia aligns itself with the statement made at the 45th meeting by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Bolivian Government — the Bolivian State — stands by the Palestinian people's cause and supports the exercise of their rights. We also support the establishment of the Palestinian State, based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support the decision of our Palestinian brothers and sisters regarding their inalienable right to self-determination.

Yesterday was a historic day. The General Assembly fulfilled its incontrovertible moral, political and legal obligation to guarantee recognition of the Palestinian State. That historic step will without doubt reaffirm faith in the Assembly and in the Organization.

Bolivia not only resolutely supported resolution 67/19 adopted yesterday; it also denounces the crimes that Israel is committing against the Palestinian people. Bolivia denounces Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Bolivia denounces the illegal settlements that are multiplying in Palestinian territory. Bolivia denounces the construction of that unspeakable wall. Bolivia denounces the violations of international humanitarian law in that part of the world.

We hope that the resolution adopted yesterday by this great Assembly will allow an end to the bombings, attacks and assassinations and allow the building of the Palestinian State, coexisting peaceably with the Israeli State. Bolivia applauds the Assembly's effort and work in this matter.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*):

"Both peoples are fully ripe for independence. We are not here to give lessons in organization to two peoples in their infancy, two peoples whose destinies are just beginning. The Jewish effort in Palestine is, in many respects, exemplary ... And the ability of the Arabs to shape their own destiny by their work, their initiative and their courage is shown not only by their present achievements but by their glorious past. Those of us who are voting for [the resolution] are not voting against either of these two peoples, against either of those two sectors of social reality in Palestine. We are voting for both of them, for their progress, their

civic development, their advancement within the community of nations" (*A/PV.125, p. 1350*).

Those sentences were not written for this occasion. They are from an explanation of vote delivered by the representative of Uruguay, Ambassador Rodríguez Fabregat, exactly 65 years ago, on 26 November 1947, when the General Assembly was to vote on resolution 181 (II), which approved the Partition Plan and the two-State solution.

Sixty-five years after the adoption of that resolution, which Uruguay clearly supported, we are convinced that there cannot be a solution to the peace process in the Middle East without the existence of two strong States. For that reason we are fully confident that the equally clear support that we gave yesterday to resolution 67/19 does nothing to impede efforts to resume the peace process but on the contrary, it stimulates and complements it.

Uruguay supports the right of the States of Israel and Palestine to live in peace, within safe and recognized borders, in an environment of renewed cooperation, free from any threats or acts that disturb peace, including terrorist acts. We recognize that the Palestinian people have a legitimate right to live in a safe, robust State that is economically viable and at peace with Israel. However, we know that nothing can replace bilateral dialogue and that it is through such dialogue that a solution must be found to the various outstanding issues. It is therefore crucial that negotiations be resumed as soon as possible.

Full respect for international law and its principles, for international humanitarian law, for international human rights law and for United Nations resolutions is the key to facilitating a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to the conflict. That statement, though obvious, cannot be taken for granted, particularly when considering the fragility of the current situation in the region.

We hope that the adoption of the draft resolution on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (A/67/L.17) will contribute to easing the tension that prevails today in the region, especially in the Gaza Strip, where we must establish conditions for humanitarian assistance and for respect for the human rights of the civilian population, to prevent further suffering. But above all, we hope for a speedy resumption of the peace process, so that, once and for all, the wish that Israel and Palestine can live in peace can be fulfilled. Along that path, Israel and Palestine will find Uruguay in the same place it was 65 years ago — that of a friendly country and a constructive interlocutor that wishes only peace and well-being for both peoples.

Mr. Al-Sallal (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We would also like to thank the Chair of the Committee for his efforts to promote the Palestinian cause. We wish to take this opportunity to express our joy with regard to the commemoration today of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is a resounding proof of the legitimacy of their struggle and their right to resist occupation and establish an independent State on their own national soil with East Jerusalem as its capital.

More than six decades have passed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly. We regret that, for all that time, the Palestinian people have been deprived of their rights as a result of the terrible escalation of Israeli violence, the settlement expansion and the infringement of the rights of unarmed Palestinians. In addition, there have also been the killing of activists, the oppression of prisoners and the ongoing attempts to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israelis, all of which requires that the United Nations play a stronger and more effective leading role, without omitting the role of the United Nations agencies, which must also deal with Israel's refusal to respect international resolutions. Such a refusal denies any chances of peaceful or pragmatic solutions and initiatives.

The international community has not exerted pressure on Israel, and that is the main missing factor impeding the implementation of international justice. It undermines the role of the United Nations and the requirements of international law. It also impedes justice, liberty and the implementation of international resolutions.

From this rostrum, we fully support the admission of the State of Palestine as a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations. We reiterate the legality of that request and the need to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. We call upon the Security Council to respond positively to the request for the admission of Palestine as a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations. We commend the

Palestinian State and the Palestinian people on this historic occasion, namely the granting of non-member observer status to Palestine at the United Nations, with the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". The resolution's adoption coincided with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The peace process has reached a stalemate, as the Israeli Government has continued its settlement policies, expanding into more of the occupied Palestinian territory and into Jerusalem. Israel refuses to put an end to that policy, which violates international law and relevant international resolutions and fails to meet the requirements for peace. That Israeli stubbornness has stymied the chances of achieving peace and the possibility of establishing a sovereign Palestinian State. We hold Israel fully responsible for the stalemate in those negotiations and for the settlement policy that it has adopted as an alternative to peace, even though the international community has clearly and unanimously confirmed the illegality of those settlements and the extensive damage that has been wrought as a result of the settlements on the negotiations, given the impact that they have had on the possibility of attaining a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Once again, my delegation restates that a just and comprehensive peace will only be achieved through a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory to the borders established before 4 June 1967, and that peace requires the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and from the occupied territories in southern Lebanon. To that end, we call upon the United Nations and the international community to fully shoulder their responsibilities by guaranteeing the rights of the Palestinian people and by compelling Israel to refrain from its policy of State terrorism and violence and by urging Israel to truly implement the international resolutions and regional initiatives relating to the peace process, so that peace can be forged and we can find just and comprehensive solutions allowing for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

There can be no talk of peace or security or stability in the region as long as Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories continues and the crimes perpetrated as a result of the occupation continue against the Palestinian people, who are defending their existence, independence and dignity. Those crimes have severely affected Gaza. As a result of Israel's aggressions, heinous crimes have been perpetrated against innocent civilians in Gaza, against women, children and the elderly. Those acts of aggression have destroyed homes and reflect one of the worst faces of State terrorism. Those practices violate human rights, and we call upon the international community, as represented by the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities in order to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter, and protect the Palestinian people by guaranteeing a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Such a peace is more urgent now than ever before. Indeed, an independent Palestinian State must be established, and the root causes of the conflict must be tackled. They must be addressed by putting an end to Israel's occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

We call upon the Palestinian leaders to set aside their differences, close ranks and work together in order to promote comprehensive national reconciliation in Palestine, which will help strengthen security, so that the aspirations of the Palestinian people — the desire to put an end to the occupation and to establish an independent State — may be realized. They aspire to put an end to the occupation and establish a national independent State.

Gaza is under an illegal and inhumane siege that has lasted for more than five years, and is troubled by a deep economic crisis. It is also troubled by the lack of health care and social services. More than 1.7 million Palestinians are suffering in Gaza as a result of the humanitarian crisis.

The crisis requires the United Nations to fulfil its responsibilities. The international community must end the unjust blockade. Gaza must be promptly rebuilt; all crossing points must be reopened; and the suffering of the Palestinian people must be alleviated.

Ms. Al-Nussairy (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and people of Iraq, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Palestinian people and Government on their achieving non-member observer State status at the United Nations. It is a historic achievement and the first step towards full recognition of the State of Palestine. Resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestinian in the United Nations", under

agenda item 37 at the sixty-seventh session, received 138 votes in favour. That shows that the international community is convinced of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and of their right to live in peace, freedom and full sovereignty, unfettered by Israeli occupation.

We are all the more proud because we were among the sponsors of the draft resolution. We have always stressed our full, unreserved solidarity with the demands by the Palestinian people for their right to self-determination and for recognition of the State of Palestine, within the pre-1967 borders. We stress the provisions of the resolution dealing with the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights to self-determination and to a peaceful settlement to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, and to the resumption and acceleration of negotiations under the umbrella of the Middle East peace process.

The peace process is at a standstill, as if it were in a cul-de-sac. The economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is abysmal and continues to deteriorate because Israel refuses to freeze settlement activities and abide by the established terms of reference of the peace process. The situation of Palestine under occupation, the aggression against its land and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes are all part of the Israeli strategy to force Palestinians to abandon their land, in order to entrench a permanent occupation. Israel continues to encroach on Palestinian land, to violate the human rights of civilians and to disregard international resolutions and the principles of the Charter.

We therefore call on the United Nations and the international community to intensify efforts to support the Palestinian people in achieving its correct full status in international forums and organizations. We call on the international community to deter the continuing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, which has led to thousands of victims, including children, women and the elderly.

Israel must put an end to its ongoing colonization of Palestinian land. Iraq, in support of the Palestinian cause and because of its deep belief in the need for the Palestinian people to enjoy full sovereignty, independence and a true life of dignity, has decided to host an international conference in Baghdad next month on Palestinian detainees, in order to consider the issue of Palestinian and Arab detainees and prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons, in implementation of the Baghdad Summit of the League of Arab States. Invitations have been issued to eminent regional and international persons to attend the upcoming conference. We reiterate our support for the Palestinian cause and hope that the Palestinian people will gain full membership in the United Nations and will live in an independent sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland): On behalf of the Icelandic Government, I extend warm congratulations to our Palestinian sisters and brothers. Resolution 67/19, adopted by the General Assembly yesterday, is a major step by the international community towards fulfilling a promise made a long time ago.

It is the sincere hope of the Icelandic Government that the resolution will become a turning point towards peace and that it will be used to reinvigorate efforts by both parties, as well as the international community, to negotiate all outstanding issues leading to a two-State solution with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security. We also hope to see renewed efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation and for the international community to accommodate such efforts.

We welcome the broad support demonstrated by the Members of the United Nations for the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. We call upon all Members, including Israel, to unite and embrace the momentum created by this occasion. A negotiated political solution is by far the best way to reach peace and ensure long-term security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Iceland has consistently argued for the principle of self-determination on the part of small nations. The right of a people to choose its own destiny and carve out its own future is a vitally important concept for small nations such as Iceland. It is on the basis of that principle that Iceland supports, and will continue to support, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and freedom from occupation.

Once again, we welcome Palestine as a non-member observer State, and we look forward to the time when we will be able to salute the State of Palestine as the 194th Member State.

Ms. Lalama (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador congratulates Palestine on the overwhelming vote in its favour cast by the international community yesterday,

29 November, when the Assembly adopted resolution 67/19. Our votes were the expression of our firm commitment to finding a lasting and fair peace for the Israelis and Palestinians. That significant support shows our recognition of the historic injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people. It reaffirms their human and national rights and calls for respect for, and compliance with, international law and humanitarian law. Moreover, it also acknowledges the oppression that has been committed by the neighbouring army.

The endorsement of Palestine as an observer State represents the support of the international community for the peace process and is a strong message to the Quartet, especially the Security Council, which has covertly tolerated the protracted occupation of Palestinian territory, as proven by the recent events in Gaza.

In keeping with its principles of the right to self-determination of peoples and the peaceful settlement of disputes that are enshrined in article 416 of its Constitution, Ecuador is convinced that an independent, sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State is a key element in resolving the conflict. It would have positive effects for Israel's security, for the establishment of peace in the region and thus for the international community.

A just, peaceful and lasting solution can be achieved through dialogue among the parties that is based on respect for the basic norms of international law and the treaties and resolutions of the political bodies of the United Nations. In that context, my country calls upon Israel to halt the acts of individual and collective punishment and to immediately halt its military occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem by implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It must also immediately end its blockade against food supplies, water, medication and basic services in the Palestinian territories.

At this new stage in history, my country calls upon the parties to sit down at the negotiating table with a sense of urgency, in order to attain the peace to which all aspire.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that Ecuador will continue to extend its firm support and solidarity to the people of Palestine and to fully support their aspirations to become a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 7 January 2011, the Government of Chile officially recognized the State of Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State. On that basis, my delegation, in an act of justice and solidarity with the Palestinian people, voted in favour of resolution 67/19, which granted to Palestine non-member observer State status in the General Assembly, yesterday afternoon, 29 November 2012.

As stated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile in the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, in September:

> "We strongly believe that the Palestinian people have the right to a free, sovereign and democratic State. However, we also note that the State of Israel has the right to recognized, safe and respected borders. Only in that way will Palestinians and Israelis be able to coexist and move forward in peace and harmony." (*A/67/PV.15, p. 38*)

In that context, my delegation calls for the rapid resumption of direct negotiations between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, with a view to finding a stable and lasting solution based on two independent and sovereign States.

My delegation also calls for an end to the violence that has affected so many innocent civilians — Israelis and Palestinians — and that impedes the peace process that is as necessary as it is longed for, so that they may coexist harmoniously and with good understanding as two peoples and two States, friends of Chile.

My country hopes and expects that the current ceasefire can be further strengthened by resuming the bilateral dialogue for the sake of peace.

Mr. Pham Vinh Quang (Viet Nam): At the outset, on behalf the Government and the people of Viet Nam, I would like to congratulate Palestine on being accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. On this occasion, Viet Nam wishes to reaffirm its principled support for the courageous struggle and rights of the Palestinian people over more than 65 years, in particular the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State.

Viet Nam recognized the State of Palestine in its early days. It co-sponsored resolution 67/19 and will support Palestine's legitimate request for full membership in the United Nations.

Viet Nam is of the view that the Arab-Israeli conflict, of which the Palestinian question is the core, can be solved only through peaceful negotiations aimed at a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution based on respect for the legitimate interests of all concerned parties, especially the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish a State of Palestine in their homeland.

Viet Nam supports all regional and international efforts to move the Middle East peace process forward and urges the parties concerned to work together to realize the agreements and thus contribute to peace and stability in the region. We call for intensified efforts by the international community, in particular the Security Council and the Quartet, to address the current political and humanitarian crisis and to promote a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Once again, the Government and people of Viet Nam reaffirm their strong support for the just cause and the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. We firmly believe that the struggle of the Palestinian people, with the support of the international community, will achieve full victory.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Yesterday was a historic day. On that day, the United Nations granted Palestine the status of non-member observer State in this body. The day will be remembered as a milestone on the road to achieving full statehood for the Palestine people and peace in the Middle East. We are proud to have co-sponsored resolution 67/19, which granted that status. We are pleased to stay on the right side of history. It was not our political or strategic choice, but our moral obligation to stand by the oppressed people of Palestine in their right struggle for self-determination and independence.

The decision was taken on an auspicious day, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Sixty-five years ago on that day, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the land of historic Palestine into two States — the State of Israel and an Arab State of Palestine. As for Palestine, statehood has evaded it for more than six decades. With the overwhelming support that the resolution received, we can genuinely hope that Palestine will soon enjoy full membership in the United Nations and perform as a sovereign and active Member, like any other nation. We regret that some delegations could not support this historic decision, which is a step towards peace and security in the Middle East.

We are convinced that the new status will provide much-needed impetus to the stalled peace process, contrary to what some apprehend. The progress on Palestinian status at the United Nations will generate a new dynamism in the peace process and uphold the two-State solution espoused by the international community.

Some delegations argued that the status should have been decided through negotiations between the two parties, not by this multilateral body. History does not support them. Bangladesh is a case in point. My country came into being through struggle for self-determination. We proceeded in a similar fashion in this multilateral forum. First, we received the approval of the General Assembly, and eventually came the endorsement of the Security Council. Bangladesh emerged as a responsible and proud member of the community of nations by that multilateral move. The country of Israel, which objected to this General Assembly resolution, was founded in the land of Palestine through a United Nations resolution, not by any bilateral negotiations.

The past year has been characterized by the stalemate in the peace process and the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. There has been no sign of the peace negotiations resuming. Israel continues to refuse to freeze its settlement activity and adhere to other terms of reference of the peace process. A Palestinian State cannot emerge out of bilateral negotiations in such a scenario. The mindset of the leadership must change. The people of Palestine languish under unilateral Israeli occupation, unilateral blockade and unilateral closures, day after day, year after year. They are left with no choice but to approach this body and seek whatever redress is possible.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364) reflect, yet again, the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We regret that repeated appeals of the international community to improve the deteriorating conditions of the Palestinian people remain unheeded. The illegal separation wall continues to divide and isolate communities, destroying livelihoods and preventing hundreds of thousands access to their jobs, families, markets, schools and hospitals. Israel continues to build

the wall on West Bank land, contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273). Walls are not a solution. Echoing President Ronald Reagan, I ask that these walls be torn down in order to have sustainable peace and security.

Gaza's borders have been subject to a regime of closure that is without precedent anywhere on the planet Earth. The quality of life of the Palestinians had already diminished to subsistence level. The periodic escalation of violence only leads to further desperation and despair. The question is: Is Israel doing this purposefully, to generate fear, fury and distress among Palestinians? The recent attacks in Gaza were, yet again, flagrant violations of international law by the occupying Power, Israel, in utter disregard for international outcry. The question is: Will not such acts generate more hatred and foment further polarization and extremism? It is time to review and reflect and make strategic choices for a better future for both peoples.

One issue that deserves the most serious attention is the continued construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. The international community has made repeated calls to cease such activities, and Israel has, time and again, expressed its commitment to do so. The settlements present an existential threat to the viability of a future Palestinian State. They are contrary to international law and the road map, and they must cease. The International Court of Justice described the violation by Israel of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination as the violation of an obligation *erga omnes*. If we are serious about peace in the Middle East, we must exert collective pressure on Israel to stop expansion of the illegal settlements and dismantle the existing ones, in line with its obligations under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The upgraded status of Palestine is a small step toward amending an historical injustice. Much work lies ahead to create the conditions that will allow the resumption of meaningful negotiations and preserve the viability of the two-State solution. Our goal remains realizing the inalienable and legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people by creating an independent, viable, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions and in accordance with the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace.

That needs our collective resolve. Otherwise, peace, hope and prosperity of the peoples in the Holy Land will remain as elusive as ever. Let us hope that the adoption of resolution 67/19 will lead to better understanding and urgency between Israel and Palestine to restart the stalled peace negotiations for achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Yesterday, at the 44th meeting, the General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a country deserving of life. Today we endorse the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to life, dignity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination.

The vote that we witnessed yesterday was a manifestation of the voice of history as a symphony of peace, independence and freedom. At the same time, it served as a cry in the face of injustice, aggression, occupation and racism. How fortunate it was that the vote took place only a few days after the barbaric aggression launched by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The echo reverberating from New York affirmed that the voice of justice is louder than the cry of injustice and the symphony of peace is softer than the drums of war, and that the flowers of freedom will not be crushed under the tanks of occupation.

The people of Mecca and Medina longingly look towards the Holy City of Jerusalem, awaiting the day that the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque will be released from its prison and Jerusalem will be restored as the eternal capital of the Palestinian people and its independent State once and for all.

The dream of the late King Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque has become the dream of his brothers and his people. Today that dream belongs to all Saudis, foremost among them King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the monarch who launched the historic message for dialogue among all peoples, cultures and religions. That message is represented by Jerusalem, with all its mosques, churches and synagogues. It is a city that is a real embodiment of that message as it breaks the shackles of occupation, persecution and racism.

Let us thank all those who voted for resolution 67/19, those who took their rightful place among the supporters of right and justice. We hope that others will realize that they must board the train of history. They must start work on accepting the application by

Palestine for full membership in the United Nations. They have to end the occupation, bring about peace and achieve Palestine's full independence, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, which are legitimate and legal.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to convey the congratulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the brotherly people of Palestine on the occasion of adoption of resolution 67/19, which granted Palestine non-member State status in the United Nations by an overwhelming majority. That reflects the support of the international community for the Palestinian application and its solidarity with the Palestinian people in standing against the occupation and pursuing its national aspirations to achieve the right to self-determination and an independent State, with sovereignty over its national soil and with East Jerusalem as its capital. On this occasion, we would like to pay tribute to the great efforts of the leadership of the Palestinian people and President Mahmoud Abbas.

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa, the Amir of Bahrain, sends a message in which he states that this important occasion reminds us all of the permanent responsibility of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Palestinian people. The Organization must resolve the Palestinian issue peacefully in all its aspects, in a just and comprehensive way and in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

On this occasion, we renew our commitment, as the international community, to our special responsibility to the Palestinian people to right the injustices that have befallen them since 1948. It is an occasion that embodies the commitment of the international community to ending the Israeli occupation and to supporting the Palestinian people in achieving their inalienable legal rights and in their fight to achieve freedom and independence and to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination, to return to their land and to establish an independent country, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Bahrain today renews its support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and calls for the implementation of the international resolutions aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State. In that connection, we would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, for their efforts to end the illegal Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State. We express our appreciation to the Committee for monitoring the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the many political developments concerning the Palestinian question. We also thank it for its tireless efforts to raise awareness, through programmes, activities and international conferences and meetings, of the importance of the Palestinian people being able to exercise their inalienable rights. We also pay tribute to the Department of Public Information for its special information programme on the question of Palestine.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is 29 November, which is the same day that the Palestine Partition Plan was adopted under resolution 181 (II), of 1947. In 1977, the General Assembly decided to celebrate this day every year, recalling to us the importance of righting the injustices that the Palestinian people face and have faced for six decades. In that context, we would like to express our solidarity with the Palestinian people in standing against the occupation until the Palestinians achieve their national aspirations and their inalienable rights. We reiterate our support for Palestine's application, on 23 September 2011, to be accepted as a full Member of the United Nations so that the Palestinian people can finally exercise their legitimate rights.

A just, comprehensive and permanent peace is a strategic choice. It will require the full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, other relevant agreements, the Madrid terms of reference, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, please allow me to express our appreciation to the President for convening this discussion on the question of Palestine in the General Assembly. I also would like to thank the President of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, for his statement yesterday (see A/67/PV.44).

I would like to congratulate the leadership and people of Palestine on the upgrading of Palestine's status in the General Assembly to non-member observer State. While we have long supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people and leadership for full membership in the United Nations, the vote

yesterday in the Assembly was an important milestone towards that goal.

The Arab world has been undergoing unprecedented transformation during the past two years. The democratic aspirations of people in several countries are being addressed through national political processes. However, it is regrettable that the Palestinian question and the related Arab-Israeli issues have largely remained unaddressed and unresolved. Also, the Palestinian application for full membership in the United Nations, submitted more than a year ago, has not evinced any positive action from the Security Council, despite overwhelming support from the Member States.

For more than two years now, there have been no direct talks between Israel and Palestine. Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has been deteriorating due to settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those activities are creating new realities on the ground and threaten the very premise of a two-State solution. Settlements, roadblocks and the related infrastructure of occupation have also exacerbated the humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people and are adversely affecting the normal functioning of Palestinian state institutions. The Palestinian Authority is also facing a severe financial crisis that could erode the significant progress made by the Palestinian Authority in building state institutions.

The blockade of Gaza has entered its sixth year and is causing severe hardship to the population. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development have been disrupted. We strongly condemn the violence and deeply regret the loss of human lives during the recent hostilities. We hope that both parties will uphold the ceasefire agreement and implement its provisions in good faith.

We hope that the adoption yesterday of resolution 67/19 will pave the way for the resumption of serious, direct talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. India has a long history of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India was the first non-Arab country to recognize the State of Palestine nearly 25 years ago. In his message to the friendly people of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, our Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, reiterated India's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and internationally recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate India's continued support for the Palestinian cause.

Mr. Laram (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured, at the outset, to congratulate President Mahmoud Abbas and the brotherly Palestinian people on taking a first step, long awaited by the Palestinian people and a large part of the world, in acquiring an upgraded representation in the United Nations through the adoption of resolution 67/19. I want to express our pleasure in that historic achievement at a time when there is great international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to end the Israeli occupation and to establish an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. I also want to reiterate our unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and our resolve to stand side by side with the Palestinian people until the injustice under which they have suffered for more than six decades is ended.

The large number of countries that voted in favour of the State of Palestine sent a message to the entire international community that there is unprecedented international unanimity in favour of realizing the rights of the Palestinian people and enabling the Palestinians, who have suffered for so many decades, to establish their independent State and to live in dignity within borders recognized by international law.

In that context, Qatar reaffirms that the continued Israeli military occupation and Israel's persistence in its settlement policy are the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel commits the worst kind of human rights violations against a defenceless, persecuted people. Israel's claim that it fights terrorism is false. Israel is an occupying Power, and the right to fight an occupation is a legal right and cannot be equated with the military aggression of the forces.

In that connection, we condemn the Israeli aggression against Gaza two weeks ago, which claimed the lives of more than 168 people and injured hundreds of innocent civilians. In that regard, we call upon the international community to assume its full responsibility and to deal firmly with the Israeli Government by compelling it to end the siege imposed on Gaza and to refrain from any military operations

against the defenceless populations in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to build the separation wall, which undermines the human rights of hundred of thousands of Palestinians. Israel also continues to desecrate Islamic shrines, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque, while allowing extremist settlers to commit aggression against it and those praying there. It expels Muslim and Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem from the city, giving their homes to Jewish settlers, in an attempt to change the Arab, Muslim and Christian character of Jerusalem. Like all Islamic and Arab countries, Qatar condemns those policies, which undermine the chances for a comprehensive and lasting peace.

The Israeli occupation authorities continue their settlement policy, paying absolutely no heed to the calls of the international community to end the policy, which undermines the chance for a just peace based on two States, the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, living side by side. In that respect, we reaffirm that the main condition for the success of any negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli occupation authority is an immediate end to settlement activities, and not their mere suspension, as some countries call for.

Israeli policies, whether with respect to Jerusalem, illegal settlements, the separation apartheid wall, detentions or the use of force on every occasion, confirm collectively that there is no good will on Israel's part, and belie the security pretext that Israel invokes to reject peace based on international law. We reiterate that measures taken by the Israeli authorities to Judaize Jerusalem and to change the Islamic and Arab character of the holy city are null and void and without legal basis.

Israel's continued illegal practices against the Palestinian people living under occupation exacerbate the security situation in the area and undermine the prospects for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Qatar reaffirms that there can be no normal relations between Israel and the Arab countries until Israel complies with international law and respects the principle of land for peace, which has been the basis for the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis since the Madrid Conference in 1991.

Qatar also affirms that the only way to enable upcoming negotiations to reach a successful outcome is for Israel to stop all settlement activities immediately and abide by international law. It is morally reprehensible that some countries still pressure Palestinians to return to the negotiating table, putting the blame on them, while ignoring the main reason for the failure of every attempt to revive negotiations, which is the absence of goodwill on the part of Israel and its ongoing flouting of all relevant United Nations resolutions by making no move towards ending its occupation of Palestine.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): Yesterday, the General Assembly gave majority approval to resolution 67/19, by which Palestine was accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. The Holy See actively followed the steps that led to this important decision, while striving to remain neutral between the parties and to act in accordance with its nature and universal mission, as well as in consideration of its specific focus on the ethical dimension of international problems.

The Holy See considers, moreover, that yesterday's vote should be placed in the context of the efforts to find a definitive solution, with the support of the international community, to the question already dealt with in resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947. That document is the juridical basis for the existence of two States, one of which has not materialized during the subsequent 65 years, while the other has already seen the light of day.

On 15 May 2009, while leaving from Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv at the conclusion of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Pope Benedict XVI expressed the following:

> "No more bloodshed! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war! Instead, let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice; let there be genuine reconciliation and healing. Let it be universally recognized that the State of Israel has the right to exist, and to enjoy peace and security within internationally agreed borders. Let it be likewise acknowledged that the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent homeland, to live with dignity and to travel freely. Let the two-State solution become a reality, not remain a dream."

In the wake of that appeal, the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, speaking before the General Assembly in 2011, expressed the hope that the competent bodies of the United Nations would adopt a decision that would help give concrete implementation to that goal (see A/66/PV.28).

Yesterday's vote expresses the sentiment of the majority of the international community and recognizes a more significant presence for Palestine within the United Nations. At the same time, it is the conviction of the Holy See that the result does not constitute per se a sufficient solution to the existing problems in the region, which in fact can find an adequate response only through an effective commitment to building peace and stability, through justice and through respect for the legitimate aspirations of both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

At various times, therefore, the Holy See has invited the leaders of both peoples to restart the negotiations in good faith and to avoid actions or setting conditions that contradict the declarations of goodwill and the sincere search for solutions that could become secure foundations for a lasting peace. The Holy See has also often made urgent appeals to the international community to increase its commitment and encourage its creativity by adopting suitable initiatives that could help to achieve a lasting peace that respects the rights of Israelis and Palestinians. Peace demands courageous decisions.

Considering the outcome of yesterday's vote in the Assembly, and to encourage the international community, and in particular the parties directly concerned, to take concrete action aimed at achieving the objectives I mentioned, the Holy See welcomes resolution 67/19, whereby Palestine has become a non-member observer State of the United Nations.

This is also a propitious occasion to recall the common position that the Holy See and the Palestinian Liberation Organization expressed in the Basic Agreement of 15 February 2000, with the aim of supporting the recognition of internationally guaranteed special status for the city of Jerusalem, and in particular of safeguarding freedom of religion and conscience, Jerusalem's identity and sacred character as a holy city, and respect for and freedom of access to its holy places.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 477 (V), of 1 November 1950, I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Fathalla (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to send a message of congratulations from this rostrum to the Palestinian people on their attainment of non-member observer State status at the United Nations. That was an historic event, and it was even more important because the General Assembly expressed its will on the very day that the world celebrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people. It also highlights once more the solidarity of the international community, represented by the General Assembly, with them. The message sent by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an integral part of the discussion on agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine".

The adoption yesterday of resolution 67/19 advanced the question of Palestine, which has now become a non-member observer State. This is a serious and important step towards rectifying the errors made over 65 years of failure, during which the international community has not been able to arrive at a just and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian cause. This is one of the fundamental issues of the United Nations, on which many resolutions have been adopted by all the organs and agencies of our international Organization, including the General Assembly, .

The recognition of that failure is a first step forward, and the Assembly was able to adopt a resolution on a just solution to the Palestine question. However, while we have not been able to move forward with a two-State solution, which has always been recognized as the ultimate goal, an acknowledgement of the failure to implement that solution is the beginning of success, as I have said. For that reason, the adoption of resolution 67/19 was in and of itself a measure in the process of implementing a two-State solution in its recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State in the United Nations.

The resolution rectifies part of the historic injustice that Palestinians have been subjected to, and contributes to the implementation of resolution 181 (II), adopted in 1947. Subsequent resolutions have recalled that the solution must be based on the creation of two States. The resolution lays the legal foundation for and

connection between a people and their territory, within the framework of the legal concept of a State whose people have been living on its territory with no legal link to that territory; it has thus been inhabited by a people without any acknowledgement of the connection between it and them.

The adoption of the resolution by the Assembly was the culmination of the desire of Member States to continue to promote what is right and to ensure that the purposes and principles of the Organization, including Article 1 of the Charter, come to fruition. As envisioned by the founders of the Organization, the Charter calls for respect for the right of peoples to self-determination.

The upgraded status of Palestine, as promoted by the resolution, will facilitate negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Those negotiations will take place between two States recognized by the United Nations, and not between a State and an Authority. Those two States will be accountable to the international community, represented by the United Nations within the framework of the principle of international responsibility and in conformity with the provisions of international law.

To conclude, I reiterate that today is a new day for finding a just, comprehensive and timely solution to the question of Palestine and the situation of the Middle East as a whole, so that its peoples can live in peace and security and realize their aspirations. The United Nations should take as a point of departure the resolution adopted yesterday, so that Palestine can become an independent sovereign State on its own territory, living in peace within internationally recognized borders with its neighbours. That will enable Palestine to join as a full fledged Member of the United Nations, alongside all of the neighbouring countries of its region and throughout the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Members are informed that action on draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20 will be taken immediately after the debate on agenda item 36.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.47

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

47th plenary meeting
Friday, 30 November 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 36

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/342 and A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.23 and A/67/L.24)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/67/L.23 and A/67/L.24.

Mr. Khalil (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like once again to congratulate Palestine on its new status as a non-member observer State in the United Nations, following the Assembly's adoption of its historic resolution 67/19 by a landslide majority, on 29 November.

Today the Assembly will consider the situation in the Middle East in the framework of addressing the conflict in the region, which is the result of Israel's occupation of Arab territories since 1967 and its refusal to accept the will of the international community and to abide by international law and by international humanitarian law, as well as by resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, despite international and regional efforts to arrive at a peaceful, lasting and just settlement for the question of Palestine.

In the past few years, Israel's violations of international law, human rights and international humanitarian law have increased in the occupied Palestinian territories, as has become apparent in Israel's recent assault on Gaza. Moreover, the occupation authorities are continuing their oppressive policies, which include the detention of thousands of Palestinians and holding them in prison and detention centres without any legitimate grounds. The construction of the racial separation wall also continues, in contravention of international law. The oppressive siege of Gaza goes on, in blatant violation of resolution ES-10/18 and Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). There also continue to be checkpoints in the West Bank, as well as other violations and contraventions that cannot all be mentioned within the time we have.

Regrettably, all those practices are related to Israel's deliberate attempt to undermine all efforts to bring about direct negotiations with the Palestinian side. That confirms that Israel does not want to arrive at any peaceful settlement. That will cause extreme harm not only to the Palestinians and Israelis but to all the countries of the region and the entire world.

To express the international community's rejection of Israel's continued occupation and illegitimate practices in the occupied Arab territories, today I introduce to the General Assembly, on behalf of this year's sponsoring States, two draft resolutions under agenda item 36, entitled "The situation in the Middle East". The first draft resolution is entitled "Jerusalem" and the second is entitled "The Syrian Golan".

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The draft resolution on Jerusalem, A/67/L.23, reaffirms the terms of reference constituted by General Assembly and Security Council resolutions pertaining to the status of the occupied territories, especially Jerusalem, which stress that all the illegitimate administrative measures and procedures taken by Israel to impose its laws on Jerusalem are null and void. Moreover, the draft resolution stresses that any just and comprehensive resolution to the issue of Jerusalem must include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure of freedom of belief and religious practice for its inhabitants. There must be an end to settlement activities and to illegal attempts to judaize Jerusalem, which Israel and the Israeli settlers are perpetrating. It also calls for a guarantee to end the continued violations of the Palestinians' right to religious freedom and to end the repeated assaults on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as to end excavation in the Old City, including in and around religious sites.

The second draft resolution, A/67/L.24, pertains to the occupied Syrian Golan. It recalls Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and again expresses the General Assembly's deep concern over Israel's continued non-compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. It reaffirms that the Hague Convention IV of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 apply to the Syrian territory occupied since 1967. It also asserts the illegality of imposing Israeli laws on the Syrian Golan and the illegitimate nature of Israel's settlements there. It demands that Israel withdraw completely from the Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. It also calls upon Israel to respect previous arrangements in that regard.

The States sponsoring the two draft resolutions see that the time has come for the international community to deal with the Middle East conflict in an integrated way. The peoples of the region are still suffering from the effects of war and aggression. They look forward to peace, stability and coexistence, which will be achieved only through the political will of the entire international community and by Israel committing to fully withdraw from all occupied Palestinian and Arab land, in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and on the basis of the principle of land for peace and the rules of international law.

For all that to be achieved, we seek the support of all Member States in the General Assembly for the two draft resolutions. We urge everyone here to vote in favour of them, in affirmation of the strength of international will and its adherence to international legitimacy, to an end to occupation and aggression and to the primacy of the noble purposes and principles of the Charter.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Yesterday, in adopting resolution 67/19, the Assembly extended its overwhelming support to the people of Palestine at yet another historic moment in the history of the United Nations. With that historic vote, Palestine took a great step towards gaining the position it deserves as an independent and sovereign State recognized by the international community. We sincerely hope and believe that that development will lead the way to a just and comprehensive peace and will break the stalemate in the peace process.

Therefore, yesterday's vote should immediately be utilized as new momentum to revitalize the peace talks and Palestinian reconciliation. The recent ceasefire sets the appropriate circumstances for both parties to focus on diplomacy. Today, we should all encourage the parties to take that step. It is our foremost objective to find a solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We all have to be sure about one fact. The stalemate is neither sustainable nor acceptable. The recent operation in Gaza, resulting in the loss of many innocent civilian lives, was testimony to that. Needless to say, illegal settlement activities and the ongoing blockade on Gaza, for over five years, seriously harm the prospects for peace in the future. Therefore we repeat our calls for the immediate implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) to end the restrictions on the inhabitants of Gaza, which affect their basic human rights each and every day.

Along with our international partners, we will resolutely maintain our efforts for Palestine to be granted United Nations membership in the near future and will continue to defend the just cause of the Palestinian people.

The situation in Syria continues to be a grave humanitarian crisis. As winter's cold arrives, the humanitarian situation is getting even more dramatic. This morning we heard in detail from Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, that the crisis has gone beyond being local and has unfortunately

spilled over into neighbouring countries, whether in the form of cross-border fire or in the massive movement of civilians seeking safety and shelter. Turkey lost five citizens in the town of Akçakale to cross-border shelling. More were injured as a result of stray bullets and shell fragments.

Nevertheless, we shall continue to utilize all our efforts, with the support of the international community, to continue extending our helping hand to the Syrian people. As of today, Turkey hosts 130,449 Syrians in 14 camps with sanitation, health and education facilities. Some 80,000 are residing elsewhere in Turkey, making their way to various cities and towns by their own means. To cope with the increasing numbers, we are building more facilities and trying to meet the humanitarian demand. However, as highlighted by the Secretary-General and the Special Joint Representative this morning, plans for humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria are severely underfunded and require further attention from the international community.

Still, efforts on the humanitarian front are not enough to address the root cause of the crisis. Towards that end, Turkey will continue to support Special Representative Brahimi and the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

The people of the Middle East rightfully deserve a dignified life and the dividends of democracy and peace. Each and every nation will have its own way of addressing the question. Yet the international community's stance in each case should be identical — a staunch support for universal values and principles that uphold human dignity, and respect for unity and territorial integrity.

On that note, allow me to commend the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas and to conclude by congratulating the Palestinian delegation in the Hall, as well as the people of the State of Palestine. Now it is time for all of us to encourage the two States to live side by side in peace.

Mrs. Comesaña Perdomo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba once again congratulates the Palestinian people and leaders on their historic victory yesterday. Cuba believes that this is a further step on the path towards the recognition of a State of Palestine. We call on the Security Council to take a decision in this respect and respond to the demands of the Palestinian people and the majority of the Member States.

The situation in the region, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories, continues to be deplorable. In the Gaza Strip, the most recent escalation of violence unleashed by Israeli military forces left hundreds of innocent victims dead, including women and children, and more than a thousand wounded. Cuba reiterates its serious concern regarding the continuing deterioration of the situation in the region, particularly as a result of the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel against the civilian Palestinian population and many other illegal policies and practices, such as the expansion of Israeli settlements, the continued violations of human rights and systematic war crimes, which inflict great suffering on the Palestinian people.

Israel's bellicose policy undermines the stability of the entire Middle East and thus international peace. Its lack of respect for international law and its continued illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and other Arab territories continue to be the major obstacles to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

We repeat the call on the international community to require the Israeli authorities to abstain from any action that would lead to a new escalation of the situation. We demand the immediate lifting of the illegal, cruel and genocidal blockade against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, the opening of border crossings and the free circulation of goods to and from that area. Permanent humanitarian access must be guaranteed, as must the implementation of legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In the same vein, we call for an immediate end to the demolition of Palestinian houses, the construction of the wall and the displacement of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, as well as all other acts of incitement, provocation and illegal aggression carried out by extremist settlers against the Palestinian people and holy sites.

Another obstacle to the achievement of a lasting peace in the region is the ongoing occupation and de facto annexation of the Syrian Golan. Cuba regards as null, void and without legal effect all legislative and administrative measures and actions that Israel has taken or could take with the aim of changing the legal status, physical character or demographic composition of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as Israeli measures to enforce its jurisdiction and administration in that area. Israel's decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its legislation, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan and the illegal settlement construction and expansion activities

in that territory since 1977 constitute a flagrant violation of international law, international conventions and the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

Cuba strongly condemns the brutal Israeli practices in the prisons created since the occupation and reiterates its serious concern about the inhumane conditions experienced by those detained in the occupied Syrian Golan. This has harmed their physical health and put their lives at risk, in clear violation of international humanitarian law.

Cuba has closely followed the events in Syria. We reiterate our position on the manoeuvres by certain NATO countries to get the Security Council to legitimize aggression against Syria. In doing so, they are counting on the complicity of major media outlets, which are used to distorting reality and not having to answer for the consequences of their actions. The incitements to violence, military aggression and foreign intervention advocated in some of the press and by high-ranking politicians are cause for serious concern. Cuba denounces those actions aimed at justifying aggression against the Syrian people.

Cuba shares the concern about the loss of innocent lives in Syria, as in any part of the world, and condemns all acts of violence taking place in that country. At the same time, we reiterate our categorical rejection of any type of foreign intervention, whether direct or indirect, including logistical support to irregular armed groups. An intervention by foreign forces in Syria would have serious consequences for international peace and security, in particular for the Middle East. Given the experiences and precedents created by recent cases in which we saw manipulation of the Charter of the United Nations, double standards and flagrant violation of international law, we reiterate our rejection of any attempt to undermine the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

The role of the international community in these times of difficulty for a Member State is to provide assistance in order to safeguard peace and stability in that country. We reaffirm our confidence in the capacity of the Syrian people and Government to resolve their internal problems without foreign intervention. We demand full respect for the self-determination and sovereignty of that Arab country.

Cuba reiterates once more its support for the Middle East peace process on the basis of the provisions of the Arab Peace Initiative, the road map and the principle of land for peace. We reject the attempts to change the mandate of the peace process, and we denounce Israel's implementation of unilateral measures and strategies aimed at imposing an illegal unilateral solution. The Palestinian people have the inalienable right to establish an independent, sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call for the unconditional return of all Arab territories occupied in June 1977. This is the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Please allow me, at the outset, to extend our sincere thanks to my dear colleague, the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for his introduction of draft resolutions A/67/L.23 and A/67/L.24, on occupied Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, respectively.

I would also like to begin my statement with a special appeal to all colleagues, in particular those who extend their goodwill to my country, not to discuss the issue of my country, since we are now discussing the situation in the Middle East. As we all know, this is an item that for decades has been mostly concerned with putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. No matter how good the intent, any discussion of the situation in my country at present would distract from the central issue, which is the situation in the Middle East. Those who would like to discuss the issue of the Syrian Arab Republic may do that when the issue of the Syrian Arab Republic is under discussion.

Perhaps it would be useful at the outset to recall that all laws, including international law, are promulgated for the purpose of being implemented, and that the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments were adopted for the purpose of being respected, and that resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those regarding the rejection of foreign occupation of the land of others, were also adopted to be implemented. That is all supposed to be taken seriously and to be applied to all without exception. I do not believe that any representative of a State that joined the Organization for its noble objectives, with a view to establishing international peace and security and justice, would think that he came here to adopt resolutions that later become dead letters or to only invoke certain provisions of international law

when making statements under the auspices of the Organization.

Here we are today, meeting again for perhaps the hundredth time, or maybe the thousandth or ten-thousandth time, to call on Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories, to end its racist and inhumane policies, its violations of international instruments and norms, its feverish settlement campaigns and the systematic killing of civilians in the occupied Arab territories. In spite of the foregoing, in spite of all the appeals of the international community, there has been no progress whatsoever so far in putting an end to Israeli occupation or stopping its politics of aggression.

On the contrary, matters have gotten worse in the light of Israel's flagrant disregard for international legitimacy and for all human and moral values and of its complete disregard for the United Nations resolutions on the issue. In addition, there has been an unprecedented wave of settlement-building and continued escalation of Israeli violence, most recently the aggression against Gaza, threatening the region with catastrophic consequences and raising the spectre of war at the expense of the prospects for peace.

Settlement activities, which have been condemned and declared objectionable legally and internationally, continue. There seems to be acceptable settlement activity pursuant to the policy of fait accompli, and there is settlement activity that is justified in the name of so-called demographic expansion. Then there is settlement activity that is maintained for the purpose of negotiating exchange for other lands, and there is blind, indiscriminate settlement activity that is subject to negotiations. There is also settlement activity that is not to be discussed because it touches on the sanctity of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. Even internationally and legally condemned and rejected settlement activity has become, for some, a negotiable issue.

The manner in which the United Nations and its Member States have dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict can no longer be a routine act of solidarity without serious activity and tangible results. Israel's intransigence and the support it gets from certain countries should not lead to an admission of failure by the United Nations to uphold its duties pursuant to the Charter and its own resolutions. If that were to happen, it would lead to catastrophic consequences for our peoples and our region, and it would also undermine the United Nations in its entirety.

In that connection, we would like to note that transferring the issue of peace in the Middle East from the United Nations to the international Quartet has not accomplished anything with respect to the issue at hand. In some ways, it has diminished the role of the United Nations and paralysed it, transferring its leading role to suspect mediators whose role is confined to providing blind support to Israel and continued justification for that country's criminal behaviour and aggression. There has not been a single meeting of the Quartet during the current session of the General Assembly or even during the Israeli aggression against Gaza. For that matter, the United Nations itself failed to hold even a single meeting during the recent Israeli aggression against Gaza.

More than 45 years have passed since Israel occupied the Syrian Golan. However, those long years do not seem to be enough for Israel to abide by relevant United Nations resolutions that require it to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan and to cease its systematic and serious violations of human rights and the policies of terror, oppression, racial discrimination and arbitrary arrest of Syrian citizens suffering under the yoke of occupation in the Syrian Golan. Those policies place restrictions on all aspects of their lives, including their right to stay in contact with their motherland, Syria. Matters have reached the point where the Israelis have put a 2-year-old child under house arrest and separated him from his mother, a student at Damascus University, because she gave birth to him in Syria. When she took him back to the Golan, that Syrian child of the age of 2 did not have the right to go to the Golan, in the view of the Israelis.

The Israeli occupation authorities continue their feverish settlement activities in the Golan and have built an apartheid wall east of the Syrian city of Majdal Shams and refuse to turn over maps of landmines planted in the Golan territories to international organizations, including our Organization. The explosions of cluster bombs and mines planted by the Israelis in the Golan have so far taken the lives of 726 Syrians, 227 of whom were children, most recently two children who lost their lives early last month due to the explosion of a mine.

We have informed the Secretariat of all those violations, the most recent of which is an increase in the number of kidnappings of Syrian citizens from the

Syrian side of the disengagement area by the Israeli occupying forces. Things have become so serious that Israel is now supporting armed terrorist groups that are spreading east of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force area of operation. It is truly regrettable that in spite of all of the documented Israeli crimes and the United Nations resolutions condemning those crimes without reservation, the Israeli civilian and military authorities continue to avoid international accountability, thanks to the illegitimate immunity permitted them by certain States.

Certainly, it was noticed by all who were present in this Hall yesterday that the officials of the occupying Israeli Government justified their objection to the according of United Nations non-member observer State status to Palestine by stating that if Palestine were accorded its full right to membership, it would later become possible for the Palestinian State to pursue claims against Israeli war criminals before the International Criminal Court. That was the justification for their objection, and thus their admission proves that they truly are war criminals.

Perhaps it is clear to all that the illegitimate immunity the Zionists have enjoyed since they took over Palestine has acted as a green light that has not changed to date. Rather, that green light has allowed the Israeli leaders to continue their intransigence and their escalated crimes of aggression. It has prompted us not only to condemn the Israeli occupying authorities, but also to place responsibility, clearly, on the shoulders of certain influential States that ensure Israel's immunity and provide it with protection and cover in international forums, including in the Security Council and within the Quartet. It has exposed the politics of double standards used by those States, as well as their unprecedented hypocrisy in terms of certain noble issues, such as protection of civilians, promotion of human rights, respect for international law and the implementation of United Nations resolutions.

The option of a just and comprehensive peace will not be possible absent the complete withdrawal by Israel from all of the Arab territories to the borders of 4 June 1967, the establishment of the independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees, based on resolution 194 (III) of 1948. All actions must be carried out in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, foremost among them Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), on the occupied Syrian Golan.

In conclusion, I call upon Member States to vote in favour of draft resolution A/67/L.23, on occupied Jerusalem, and draft resolution A/67/L.24, on the occupied Syrian Golan, in order to uphold international law and promote the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): Developments over the past few weeks, in particular Israel's attack on the people of Palestine in Gaza, have sparked an international crisis that nearly caused instability and turmoil in the whole region. What deeply concerns my delegation is that despite the gravity of the situation, the Security Council was rendered powerless, not just to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities, but even to decide whether to act or not. We, the international community, cannot allow that to happen again. We cannot remain unwilling to act, as failure to act would demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the current multilateral system, particularly the Security Council and the United Nations.

Time and again, we are faced with the situation in the Middle East, especially the question of Palestine. Malaysia believes that in order to avoid being faced with a similar situation in the future, we need to address the crux of the issue and resolve the conflict once and for all.

Today we are still no closer to resolving the question of Palestine. In fact, if we were to take a closer look, we would find that we are much further away from a peaceful settlement than at any time before, because the situation on the ground has deteriorated. Israel has continued to take all measures to change the demographic features of the occupied territory, systematically displacing Palestinians from the West Bank and East Jerusalem. At the same time, the illegal blockade of Gaza continues to suffocate the people.

When will this end? Do not the people of Palestine deserve a better future and to live in dignity?

Israel has continued to violate international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, for far too long. It has continued to ignore international calls to respect, adhere to and abide by the Geneva Conventions and all relevant Security Council resolutions. The international community has not been able to hold Israel accountable for all its deliberate acts of violence.

Instead, Israel continues to act aggressively against Palestinian civilians, and it does so with impunity. I wonder why.

The only way forward is for Israel to respect international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. It should cease all illegal settlement activities and restart negotiations in good faith, which would demonstrate its intention to truly bring an end to the conflict. It must realize and accept that a lasting and just solution to the question on Palestine will not only benefit the Palestinians, but would contribute to Israel's own safety and security.

For our part, the international community must reject any further delay in the resumption of peace talks. We must ensure that the parties return to the negotiating table without further delay. We must continue to uphold the principles for the establishment of a Palestinian State under the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Only then can Israelis and Palestinians have any chance for a stable and better future.

I call upon the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet to do what they have been mandated to do, namely, to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. Further inaction is not a choice, and time is not on our side.

Malaysia is fully aware of the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan. Malaysia will continue to support the restoration of Syrian sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. We urge Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. All measures and actions undertaken by Israel, including the construction and expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, constitute flagrant violations of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions.

The same can be said for the territories of Lebanon under Israeli occupation. We condemn the continued violations and aggression by Israel. We strongly urge Israel to fully implement Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which calls for a permanent ceasefire, the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon, and full respect for the Blue Line. Israel must withdraw from the Shab'a farmlands, the Kafr Shuba hills and the Lebanese part of Ghajar village up to behind the Blue Line.

Yesterday we celebrated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Palestine has been accorded the status of a non-member observer State in the General Assembly. It is something to celebrate, although full membership in the United Nations is the ultimate goal. Malaysia believes that this marks the first step for Palestine towards becoming a sovereign State. In moving forward, we call on all Member States, including the permanent members of the Security Council, to support the admission of Palestine as a full State Member of the United Nations, as that is a legitimate aspiration shared by an overwhelming majority of Member States.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has always firmly supported the just cause of the Palestinian people in seeking to restore their legitimate rights as a nation and to establish a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Yesterday, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/19, granting Palestine the status of non-member observer State. That is a further positive development towards the realization of independent Palestinian statehood. The resolution also shows the international community's extensive support for the just cause of the Palestinian people in seeking to restore their legitimate rights.

Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable means for resolving the question of Palestine and Israel. China has always maintained that the two parties should settle their differences through dialogue and negotiation and on the basis of the relevant resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map for peace in the Middle East, so as to achieve the goal of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace.

China is greatly concerned about the continuing deadlock in the peace talks between the two parties. The recent clashes in the Gaza Strip once again demonstrate that the current status quo in the Palestinian question is not sustainable. China calls on both parties, in particular Israel, the stronger Power, to move forward in the general interest of peace, take specific measures to remove obstacles and build mutual trust with the Palestinian side, so as to establish favourable conditions for the early resumption of peace talks and to achieve meaningful progress.

The international community should fully recognize the importance and urgency of the need to promote progress in the Middle East peace process. It should make even greater efforts to support the peace talks. It should urge the two sides to meet each other halfway, so as to overcome the current impasse in the peace talks as soon as possible.

The current humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the other occupied Palestinian territories remains severe. The Palestinian economy is facing serious difficulties. None of the above conditions is conducive to progress in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process or to regional stability. China calls on Israel to fully implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and to remove the blockade on the Gaza Strip, so as to alleviate the humanitarian plight of the inhabitants. The international community should provide more assistance and support to Palestine. China will provide all possible assistance to the Palestinian people.

The Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks are also important components in the Middle East peace process. A comprehensive solution to the Middle East question will not be achieved without fully resolving the issues between the three countries. China firmly supports the legitimate aspirations of Syria and Lebanon to maintain their national sovereignty and territorial integrity and to recover the occupied Palestinian territories. We support the efforts and strategic choices of Member States in seeking a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

China attaches great importance to the Middle East issue and will always support the peace talks and promote progress in the peace process with its own approach. China supports the role of the United Nations in the Middle East issue and stands ready to work together with the parties concerned to play a positive and constructive role in achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East region as soon as possible.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Palestine on the overwhelming support that it received during the voting on resolution 67/19 on the enhancement of its status at the United Nations. I once again wish to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Palestine lies at the core of the Middle East issue. The tragedy of Palestine is a major source of the resentment and desperation that is felt throughout the world, especially in the Muslim world. This meeting is taking place a week after yet another tragic episode in the series of repeated and grave crimes perpetrated by the Zionist regime against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Israeli regime, with unbridled impunity, intensified its military aggression against the Gaza Strip, killing, wounding and maiming Palestinian civilians, including women, the elderly and children. In a statement welcoming the recent ceasefire, the Committee on the Rights of the Child said that the attack by Israel would have a "devastating and lasting impact" on children and stressed that the recent crisis would have long-term psychological effects on young people:

> "This impact extends from a large number of deaths and injuries in Gaza to deep trauma and other psychological effects on children ... These experiences may affect them for many years to come, including into adulthood."

The Israeli regime's deadly air strikes and shelling of Gaza should be considered as part of a broader policy, marked by expansionism, aggression, oppression, collective punishment, extrajudicial killings, targeted assassinations and State terrorism, all in gross violation of international law, as was the act of occupation from the very outset. The recent Israeli crimes in the Gaza Strip would undoubtedly create more instability, serve to inflame tension and threaten to further destabilize the situation in the region. The question is, "How much longer is the world willing to endure this spectacle of wanton cruelty?", to quote Bertrand Russell.

The international community should live up to its responsibilities by preventing Israel from continuing to commit atrocities and to flout international law, norms and standards. Regrettably, some powerful Member States that happen to be permanent members of the Security Council have, as a result of their unconditional support for Israel, prevented the Security Council from taking concrete action against the crimes committed by Israel. The obstructionist role played by those same members in the General Assembly, notably yesterday on the issue of upgrading the status of Palestine at the United Nations, was another manifestation of those States' blind support for Israel with regard to preventing the Palestinian people from exercising their legitimate rights. Restrictions by the same States with respect to assistance to Palestine are tantamount to punishing the

Palestinians for exercising their basic rights to shape their fate and future.

In the same vein, the provocative declarations by the Israeli regime concerning the acceleration of construction and the revocation of Palestinian residency rights amount to political extortion of the Palestinian people. Such statements confirm that the Israeli regime has opted for settlement and residency issues as an instrument to block legitimate Palestinian demands. It should be noted that the Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and property, accompanied by escalating violence by settlers and forced evictions, is seriously exacerbating the situation on the ground.

The humanitarian situation of the Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip, also remains a source of grave concern. That disastrous situation must be ended by calling on the Israeli regime to lift the siege of Gaza and open all border crossings for the movement of goods and persons, in accordance with international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Yesterday we observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The solidarity and support enjoyed by the Palestinian people will undoubtedly have strengthened their steadfastness against injustices and occupation. The result of yesterday's vote on resolution 67/19, granting non-member observer State status to Palestine, showed the extent of the isolation of the Israeli regime. It sent a signal to those who blindly support that illegitimate regime that they seriously need to review their policies and approaches vis-à-vis that regime.

With reference to that resolution adopted yesterday under agenda item 37, and those to be adopted today under agenda item 36, I would like to reiterate once again that the solution to the question of Palestine, which is at the crux of the conflict in the Middle East, lies in compelling the Israeli occupying Power to fully withdraw from the occupied territories and enabling the Palestinian people to return to their land and establish their independent State on the entirety of Palestinian land. The Palestinian people, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, should freely express, through a democratic and peaceful mechanism — a referendum, with the participation of all the inhabitants of Palestine — their opinions regarding their fate and future and the kind of State and Government they want to have. That is the only solution, in our view, for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian crisis.

Before concluding, I would like to place on record that my delegation rejects the baseless allegations raised against my country in this Hall yesterday by the representative of Israel. This is yet another weary practice by the Israeli regime and its advocate to divert the international community's attention from the Israeli crimes in Palestine and elsewhere in the region by raising unfounded allegations against others. I do not want to take up the Assembly's time to respond to those irresponsible claims. However, in the context of Israel's defiance of the international community, I would like to refer to only one aspect of the dangerous behaviour of that regime — the infamous Israeli nuclear weapons programme, which is a showcase of five decades of concealment and deception and of total disregard for the demands of the international community.

Nuclear weapons in the hands of a regime with an unparalleled record of State terrorism and of resorting to aggression and threats of force against other countries present a real threat to regional and global peace and security and to the non-proliferation regime. That threat needs to be urgently and decisively addressed by the international community, and the initiative to create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East should be actively pursued.

In that regard, I would like to echo the statement issued yesterday by the Non-Aligned Movement, registering its profound disappointment regarding some of the statements issued by the conveners of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons on mass destruction. Those statements called for a delay in convening the conference, which was scheduled to take place in 2012, out of fear that the conference would further isolate the Israeli regime. We believe that the failure to convene the conference before the end of this year contradicts and violates the collective agreement of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and that it should therefore be held as originally scheduled.

Mrs. Al-Mughairy (Oman): On behalf of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman, I have the pleasure to express to President Vuk Jeremić our appreciation for the convening of this special meeting to consider the issue of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. My country's delegation would like to convey,

through him, its appreciation to Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal, for his efforts as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and for its report (A/67/35).

I shall address the two items entitled "Question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East".

At the outset, from the international forum of the General Assembly, my country congratulates the Palestinian people on the historic accomplishment yesterday, 29 November, with the Assembly's adoption of resolution 67/19, promoting the State of Palestine to the status of a non-member State in the United Nations. My country hopes that this may lead to other achievements, including the attainment of full membership in the United Nations by the State of Palestine.

There is no doubt that the present meeting is of special importance, as it will consider an issue — the question of Palestine — that is a long-standing challenge to the international community. Meanwhile, the Palestinian people remain under occupation and their situation worsens by the day as a result of the systematic, oppressive practices by the occupying Power. The international community must not remain silent and allow this situation to continue.

We are now in the sixth decade of the occupation, and the displacement and destruction of human beings and infrastructure continues. Yet the proud Palestinian people remain undiscouraged and continue to insist their legitimate rights, represented through the establishment of their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Government of my country expresses its deep concern at the tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories resulting from the continuous Israeli blockade, the imposition of a humanitarian crisis on civilians in the Gaza Strip, the intensive campaign of inhumane and illegal acts in the form of fierce attacks seeking to change the demographic composition of the population and forced displacement of the indigenous people, and the practices of the occupying Power in the noble Al-Quds and around religious sites. In addition, Israeli settlement activities, including the construction of settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem, are intensified and are consistently employed as punitive measures.

This year marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and marks as well the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), on the division of the land of Palestine into two States, in 1947. The Palestinians are still prevented from exercising their legitimate rights and their national sovereignty — their right of self-determination. This situation has led to the existence of more than 4 million Palestinian refugees suffering from alienation, deprivation and the diaspora.

The Palestinian people depend on the international community to protect them from the inhuman, illegal and arbitrary acts against them by successive Israeli Governments. Hence, the international community should stand in opposition to those practices. They include in particular the embargo on the Gaza Strip launched in 2008, the attack on the freedom convoy transporting humanitarian assistance, which was undertaken to remove the unjust embargo imposed by Israel on Gaza in flagrant violation of human rights, and the war of November 2012, which proves that Israel is not interested in achieving peace.

It is necessary for the international community to send a clear message to Israel to cease those practices and to call for genuine negotiations that will lead to the establishment of security and stability on the basis and principles of land for peace, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the Arab Peace Initiative.

My delegation confirms what was stated in Oman's intervention during the general debate regarding the complexities that arise in any discussion of the question of Palestine at General Assembly sessions (see A/67/PV.19). We are aware of the complexities of those issues. The United Nations has adopted many resolutions and policies, but this issue is still a source of concern and represents a threat of conflict that goes beyond the Middle East.

In this context, my country believes that the role of the United Nations in relation to the question of Palestine should be changed from managing the crisis to seriously pursuing a just and lasting comprehensive political solution that would take into account the interests of the Palestinians and the Israelis, leading to the establishment of the State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel. From that perspective, my country supported the proposal and was among the first sponsors of resolution 67/19, on Palestine's becoming a non-member State at the United Nations. We did so hoping that would usher in a new phase in

the concept of the Palestinian-Israeli relationship, one which could contribute positively to the settlement of this problem.

The Government of the Sultanate of Oman is looking forward to an effective and continuous role of the United States of America, especially after the positive position declared by President Barack Obama during the Assembly's sixty-fifth session, in September 2010 (see A/65/PV.11), which was welcomed by all. My Government invites Israel to seize this opportunity and take advantage of the international momentum in support of direct negotiations to achieve a partnership of peace and security with the Arab countries.

The Sultanate of Oman was one of the first countries to welcome the peace process and considered it a natural and civilized approach to settling differences through dialogue and negotiations. Oman invites the concerned parties to the peace process to play an active role in the settlement of the conflict in the Middle East because of the seriousness of the situation in the region and the crisis witnessed by the region. That will require the Security Council and the Quartet to work more vigorously and urgently for a just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict, according to the relevant international resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): On the commemorative occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People yesterday, the General Assembly adopted historic resolution 67/19, regarding the status of Palestine at the United Nations. Japan has long understood the Palestinians' aspiration to build an independent State and has supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Japan thus endorses a two-State solution under which Israel and a future independent Palestinian State would coexist side by side in peace and security. In the light of that, Japan voted in favour of this resolution.

Japan believes that following the adoption of the resolution, Palestine will bear greater responsibility vis-à-vis the international community. We strongly urge Palestine to make more earnest efforts for the realization of peace in the Middle East. We call on Palestine to immediately resume direct negotiations with Israel in order to move the peace process forward in a tangible way, in cooperation with the international community.

It is not acceptable to use this resolution to act in a way that might negatively affect or hinder direct negotiations with Israel. We ask for prudence with respect to conduct such as accession to international organizations, action which might negatively affect the prospect for the resumption of negotiations.

Israel, for its part, should improve the environment for promoting the resumption of peace negotiations. In particular, settlement activities need to be frozen, as they are a violation of international law.

Japan requests both Palestine and Israel to establish relationships of mutual trust and to promptly return to the negotiating table with a view to realizing a two-State solution. Japan will continue to make an active contribution to moving the Middle East peace process forward, in cooperation with the United States, Arab countries and other partners.

Regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip, Japan welcomes the agreement reached by Israel and the Palestinian armed groups on a ceasefire and strongly hopes that the ceasefire will be a lasting one. Japan had worked to help realize the ceasefire and highly appreciates the mediation efforts by Egypt, the United States of America, the Secretary-General and other relevant countries and organizations. Japan continues to support the efforts of the international community for the stabilization of the Gaza Strip and progress in the Middle East peace process, and provides its utmost cooperation.

With respect to assistance to Palestine, Japanese cooperation has been centred on humanitarian aid, assistance for State-building efforts, confidence-building and enhancing economic self-sustainability. Japan has extended approximately $1.3 billion in total since 1993. In addition, Japan promotes assistance to the Palestinians in cooperation with East Asian countries and is planning to hold the conference on cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian development next February in Tokyo, with East Asian countries and international organizations attending. Japan will actively promote assistance for the building of a future independent, viable Palestinian State.

Let me now touch upon the ongoing situation in Syria. Japan is deeply concerned by the serious and worsening situation in Syria and profoundly deplores the deaths of many thousands of people as a result of the continued violence. Japan reiterates its call on all

parties in Syria to immediately halt the violence and abuses of human rights, and condemns the Syrian authorities for not keeping their own commitments and for not discharging their responsibilities to protect their own citizens. Supporting the diplomatic efforts by the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Japan once again urges the Syrian authorities to cease the violence immediately and to carry out concrete measures for a Syrian-led political transition.

In that regard, Japan welcomes the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces this month. The Government of Japan hopes that the coalition represents a wide spectrum of Syrian society and will play a role in the common goal of advancing a Syrian-led transition process as early as possible. On that basis, the Government of Japan will provide support to the coalition.

As a part of efforts by the international community to promote the cessation of the violence in Syria, Japan hosted the fifth meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions today in Tokyo. The meeting sought to improve the effectiveness of the sanctions implemented by like-minded countries and to broaden the horizons of the countries participating in the sanctions. Japan strongly hopes that the Syrian regime will heed the voice of the international community to stop the violence against its own people.

The Middle East and North Africa have been experiencing a series of movements towards democratization. The Arab Spring was spawned by the people's desire for freedom and democracy. I would like to take this opportunity to renew Japan's commitment to supporting reforms to achieve the transition to democracy in the region.

Mr. Yudha (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on the situation in the Middle East, contained in documents A/67/342 and A/67/364.

Our meeting here today comes against the background of yesterday's historic event, at which the Assembly conferred non-member observer State status on the State of Palestine in adopting resolution 67/19. Indonesia is one of many States Members of this Organization that sincerely believe that the recognition of Palestine as an important component and ally of the international community is something to be proud of, not afraid of.

Indonesia remains convinced of the viability of two States living side by side in peace within the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement that includes Lebanon and Syria, and under the terms of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace. To achieve that, however, demands that the parties sit at the negotiating table to hammer out an agreement. And that, unfortunately, is where we continue to be stopped. The reports before us make clear that developments on the ground continue to damage mutual confidence and make the resumption of direct negotiations very difficult, if not impossible. The reports are categorically clear that forward movement is being hampered by the Israeli policy on settlements, which breaches international law as well as the obligations of Israel under the road map.

Indonesia has always been of the view that achieving the objectives of the parties in the conflict is neither unrealistic nor unrealizable. The fact that a mountain is difficult to climb does not put it beyond conquest. That depends on the commitment of the mountaineers.

The Secretary-General has stated that peace and Palestinian statehood are long overdue. Indonesia agrees, and would like to amplify on that. Like him, we fully believe that direct and meaningful negotiations are the main avenue towards a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution that fulfils the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians, including an end to the occupation and conflict and a just and agreed solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees. The problem is that all of that remains at the level of sentiment and rhetoric as long as the Government of Israel proceeds with policies that can only maintain the status quo.

We agree with the Secretary-General that, in view of the dramatic developments in the region, progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track is of tremendous urgency and that we are increasingly moving away from a two-State solution into a one-State reality. Such a prospect is very grim, and we must all come together and make certain that we return to the path that leads to the negotiating table, beginning with efforts to rebuild mutual confidence. To that end, we once again call on Israel to cease all settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to avoid contravening its obligations under the road map to

freeze all settlement construction, including natural growth, and to dismantle all the outposts. We reiterate that those policies simply compound the challenges and amount to deliberate hurdles on the road.

Finally, Indonesia wishes to state that, while it will continue to support a two-State solution, such a solution can succeed only if it is comprehensive and includes both the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks. Towards that end, Indonesia again calls on Israel to withdraw completely from the occupied Lebanese land, as well as from the occupied Syrian Golan, and comply fully with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

On the current situation in Syria, my delegation wishes to thank Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, for his briefing to the Assembly this morning. We continue to witness, in Syria, worsening violence and an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe on the ground, with the international community in paralysis as to how to respond. In the view of Indonesia, that represents a challenge to us to commence, as a matter of urgency, earnest work aimed at ensuring the end of the violence and to address the dire humanitarian needs of the people. We must also, without delay, start a political process aimed at finding solutions that are in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the Syrian people.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting on the situation in the Middle East. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In adopting resolution 67/19 yesterday, the Assembly took a historic decision by admitting Palestine into its family as a non-member observer State. The decision coincided with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

We congratulate President Mahmoud Abbas and the people of Palestine on that historic verdict by the Assembly. The decision is a step in the right direction. It is a step towards acceptance of the realities on the ground, and it should be a step towards recognition of Palestine as a full Member in the United Nations.

Pakistan was one of the sponsors of resolution 67/19. The Assembly's decision came after a bloody week of killings in Palestine and a very welcome ceasefire. We condemn the killings. Sophisticated weapons — warships, aircraft, artillery and missiles — were used against the people of Gaza. The military campaign left over 160 dead and more than 1,200 injured in Gaza. It has left behind a trail of destruction that has worsened the humanitarian situation. However, that recurring phenomenon must end. We urge the international community to take immediate and effective steps to ensure that violence does not erupt again.

But today, let us not talk only about violence, death and destruction. Let us talk about peace, security and stability in the region. Let us talk about resumption of the peace process and full engagement between Palestine and Israel.

Some countries were disappointed by the General Assembly's decision last evening. They thought that it was a unilateral action. The fact is that the people of Palestine have waited for far too long to exercise their right to self-determination and for recognition of their legitimate statehood. It is our earnest hope and appeal that following yesterday's decision there will be no reprisals or retaliation against Palestine. The people of Palestine need compassion and solidarity, not estrangement and punishment. We hope that instead of punitive measures, the emphasis will now shift to resuming dialogue on implementing the agreed two-State solution.

Serious doubts have recently been expressed about the viability of the two-State solution, and there has been talk of a one-State solution. As noted by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the status quo would delay the two-State solution and might usher in a one-State reality with unpredictable consequences, and, may I say, disastrous consequences. Similar concern is expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364). As the window of opportunity for a two-State solution continues to narrow, it is urgent to reactivate the Middle East peace process, based on internationally agreed terms of reference, including Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and the Madrid principles.

For a serious quest for peace and a two-State solution, the construction of illegal settlements must cease. The Secretary-General has noted that 43 per cent of the West Bank has been allocated to local and regional settlement councils, with the result that

those areas are off-limits to Palestinians, leaving the Palestinian territory divided into enclaves with little or no territorial contiguity. Israel must heed the Secretary-General's call to freeze all settlement activity, in line with the Quartet road map.

The blockade of Gaza is a violation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We call for an end to the policy of collective punishment being meted out to 1.5 million Palestinians.

The immobility of the Quartet leaves the people of Palestine with little hope. The winds of change blowing through the wider Middle East region demand fair and just dispensation for the Palestinians in terms of their destiny.

Pakistan believes that comprehensive peace in the Middle East will remain elusive without the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including through Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese territories and the Syrian Golan, is the only guarantee of sustainable peace in the region.

The dark night of suffering of the people of Palestine must end now. A Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with its neighbours is the only guarantee of security and stability in the region. The international community must rise to deliver justice.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate under this item.

I would like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/67/L.23 and A/67/L.24 will be taken after we take action on draft resolutions A/67/L.17, L.18, L.19 and L.20, under agenda item 37.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 36.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine", to take action on draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20. Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolutions, one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote on all four before and after action is taken on all of the draft resolutions.

I give the floor to Israel on a point of order.

Mr. Magid (Israel): I call for a recorded vote on all of the draft resolutions.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20.

We turn first to draft resolution A/67/L.17, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/67/L.17, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.17. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and

the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.17 was adopted by 106 votes to 7, with 56 abstentions (resolution 67/20).

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/67/L.18, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/67/L.18, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.18: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Brunei Darussalam.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.18. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga,

Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.18 was adopted by 103 votes to 7, with 61 abstentions (resolution 67/21).

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/67/L.19, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/67/L.19, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.19: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Brunei Darussalam.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.19. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, El Salvador, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Togo, Tonga, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.19 was adopted by 160 votes to 7, with 7 abstentions (resolution 67/22).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.20, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to inform the Assembly that, since the introduction of draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/67/L.20, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.20: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam and Burkina Faso.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.20. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Cameroon, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Tonga

Draft resolution A/67/L.20 was adopted by 163 votes to 6, with 5 abstentions (resolution 67/23).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Lee (Singapore): Singapore voted in favour of resolution 67/20 on the understanding that the reference in paragraph 2 to "the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders" should be interpreted in the same manner as set out in paragraph 1 of resolution 67/23, which is "the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders".

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

Agenda item 36 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/342 and A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.23 and A/67/L.24)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/67/L.23 and A/67/L.24. We turn first to draft resolution A/67/L.23, entitled "Jerusalem".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in document A/67/L.23, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.23: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.23. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Togo, Tonga, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.23 was adopted by 162 votes to 7, with 6 abstentions (resolution 67/24).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/67/L.24 is entitled "The Syrian Golan".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, in addition to the delegations listed in document A/67/L.24, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.24. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela

(Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.24 was adopted by 110 votes to 6, with 59 abstentions (resolution 67/25).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Fernandes (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Argentina and Brazil to explain our votes, as we have in previous years, on resolution 67/25, on the Syrian Golan, just now adopted by the General Assembly.

Brazil and Argentina voted in favour of the resolution because they believe that its essential character is linked to the illegitimacy of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity of a State.

At the same time, I want to clarify the position of our delegations with respect to paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote does not prejudge the content of that paragraph, particularly the reference to "the line of 4 June 1967". Brazil and Argentina believe that it is important to make progress in the search for a solution to the Syrian-Israeli track of the Middle East conflict, so as to put an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights.

Therefore, on behalf of the Governments of Brazil and Argentina, I once again stress the importance of resuming negotiations in order to find a definitive solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote.

I now give the floor to the observer of the observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I want to thank all of my colleagues who gave the State of Palestine this wonderful reception. I am delighted to hear you, Sir, introducing our participation as the State of Palestine.

Yesterday was a historic day for the Palestinian people, for the State of Palestine and for all those who support peace and justice in the Middle East. It was a historic day for the United Nations; it was a historic day for all of us in the Assembly Hall. There is no way for me to describe the enthusiasm that the General Assembly demonstrated yesterday in receiving our President, listening to him, legislating in this Hall the recognition of the State of Palestine and changing our status to that of a non-member observer State. Indeed that was a historic day and an historic action, which was received by our people in the streets of the occupied Palestinian territory, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians joyfully celebrated the historic development.

In the name of the Palestinian people and in the name of the State of Palestine, I want to thank all those who sponsored resolution 67/19 and the other resolutions adopted today under the item "Question of Palestine" and on Jerusalem. We are also very grateful to all those who voted in favour. They made history yesterday and reiterated the principled positions in the resolutions adopted today.

There are many people we can thank, including those who were very instrumental in the collection of sponsors. Among them is a person special to us, Mr. Morsi from the Arab League, who has been here for many years and has been an outstanding friend of the State of Palestine. We want to thank him from the seat of the non-member observer State of Palestine in the United Nations.

Today is the day after. Yesterday, when we promoted our draft resolution in connection with our status at the United Nations, we were contributing to saving the two-State solution, contributing to saving peace and contributing to opening doors to the possibility of creating an atmosphere that is conducive to negotiations with Israel to end the occupation that started in 1967 and to allow for the independence of our State. On the day after, we very sincerely hope that we can give this option of peace a chance. We hope not to continue with the option of denying the rights of the Palestinian people in order to continue to occupy them and impose wars on them, such as we saw ten days ago during the war against our people in the Gaza Strip.

The reaction of the Israeli Government was an immediate provocation, an immediate declaration regarding building 3,000 illegal housing units and expanding their illegal settlements. They are trying to provoke us to react in some way. I do not know how they expect us to react, but the international community reiterated its position that settlements are an illegal obstacle to peace and need to be stopped immediately. We thus expect the international community — not only the General Assembly, but also the Security Council — to uphold international law and bring Israel into compliance. They are unilaterally creating illegal facts on the ground, and they are unilaterally taking measures that are in contravention of the provisions of international law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention.

For our part, having submitted that proposal with a view to opening doors to peace, we will continue to extend our hand in peace, but the continued provocation, testing our resolve and our determination, must have limits. We are ready and willing, if the other side is ready, to negotiate in good faith on the basis of the well-known terms of reference of the peace process. If they respect and uphold international law, then perhaps we can open doors for peace to move forward.

The insistence on the option of war and destruction, violating the law, building illegal settlements, stealing our land, destroying our homes, displacing our people and building walls — these things need to be stopped, and stopped immediately, because they are not things that will create an atmosphere that will allow us to negotiate to end the occupation and to achieve the independence of our State.

The choice is theirs. If they want to move in the direction of peace, our message and the message of our President were crystal-clear yesterday. We will be working together, with the international community, to collectively bring those who are violating international law, the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, human rights law and humanitarian law into compliance. We should do so if we want to open the path of peace, put an end to the agony and tragedy of our people, liberate them from the shackles of occupation and allow us to acquire our independence. More provocations would be testing our resolve. The message that we pushed yesterday should be the message that they should listen to and take seriously into consideration if they want to move in the direction of peace with us.

I again want to thank all those who have supported our resolutions and who made history with us yesterday in making the reality of the two States legally, politically and diplomatically accepted by the General Assembly. One State came into being in 1948. The Assembly legislated its recognition of the other State through yesterday's well-known resolution 67/19 and gave it a non-member observer seat in the General Assembly with a view to, one day soon, it becoming a full Member of the United Nations.

A majority of more than two thirds of the members of the Assembly voted in favour of that resolution yesterday. In fact, 71.5 per cent of the total membership of the United Nations voted in favour of our resolution. If we do not count those that abstained, we received the votes of 93 per cent of those that were present and voting in the Assembly.

We believe that this is a massive message to the Security Council, calling on it to favourably recommend to the General Assembly the acceptance of the State of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations. We hope that the Security Council will rise to the occasion and listen to this massive message from the Assembly, which is awaiting the recommendation to allow the State of Palestine to become a full Member and for our State's flag to be put in its alphabetical place in front of this building so that we can open a new chapter of the relationship between us and our neighbour, the State of Israel, and move in the direction of peace and development. Again, our hand is extended in peace, but we need the other side to reciprocate in the same spirit.

With that message, and on the eve of the holiday season, we want to thank the Assembly again very much for its support, and we hope that very soon, if we come back to the General Assembly, it will be in order to vote to grant the State of Palestine full membership.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its sincere and deep appreciation and gratitude to the General Assembly for its adoption — every year without exception since 1981, and by a majority of the voices promoting right, justice and law — of the resolutions entitled "The Syrian Golan", this year resolution 67/25, as well as other draft resolutions under the items concerning the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine. The international community's continued support for such resolutions is a clear expression of Member States' commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, their rejection of foreign occupation and their support for our right to recover the Syrian territories that have been occupied by Israel since 5 June 1967.

The overwhelming majority of the vote in favour of these resolutions sends a clear message from the international community to Israel and its politicians to the effect that occupation, murder, policies of expansion and aggression, racial discrimination, the establishment of settlements, the imposition of a fait accompli and the forcible annexation of other people's lands are all repugnant practices that violate every international instrument and norm, foremost among them clearly the Charter of the United Nations and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Thus, the fate of all such practices is denunciation and condemnation by the international community in the General Assembly.

I would like once again to express my country's thanks to all the sponsors of resolution 67/25, entitled "The Syrian Golan", and to those who voted in favour of it, and to reiterate our call for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace, based on international legal resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), as well as the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. I would also like to stress Syria's unshakeable determination to liberate the entire Golan to the pre-occupation borders of 4 June 1967 and to remove all illegal settlements there, in accordance with all means of international law, in whose headquarters we meet today.

It is regrettable that certain countries that have been frequent advocates for human rights and the protection of civilians and international law have imposed sanctions on my country and have besieged it on that pretext, while failing to vote on resolutions that would end the Israeli occupation of part of our national homeland in the Golan, resolutions concerning Syrian citizens who have long suffered under occupation.

Some countries voted against the resolutions on both the Syrian Golan and the question of Palestine, which enjoy unprecedented international support. That only proves what we have often said, which is that the actions of the representatives of those countries do not match their words or reflect good faith. This is mere political hypocrisy and a way of dealing with important issues — such as the occupied Golan and the question of Palestine — that is based on double standards, an extreme bias in Israel's favour and a logic of aggression in international relations. Israel would not have persisted with its occupation of Arab territories if it were not for the direct support that its policies of occupation and aggression receive from those who abstained or voted against the resolution on the occupied Golan. Thus, those countries that are not on the side of the provisions of the Charter and international law also bear responsibility for the consequences of the continued Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 36.

Programme of work

The Acting President: Before concluding, I would like to inform members that consideration of agenda item 35, "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic", originally scheduled for Monday, 17 December 2012, has been postponed to a later date, to be announced.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.